

G. W. KAVEESHWAR

THE ETHICS OF THE GITA

THE BHAGAVADGITA

With the *Sanatsujaiya* and the *Anugita*; translated into English by Kashinath Telang, with critical Introduction & notes. Price Rs. 20.00

The translation of this work is as close and literal a rendering as possible of the Gita, as interpreted by the commentators *Sanakaracarya*, *Sridharasamin*, and *Madhusudan Sarasvati*: Reference has also been frequently made to the commentary of the *Ramanujacarya*, and also to that of *Nilakantha*. Some of the notes also point out parallels existing between the Gita and other works, principally the Upanisads and the *Buddhistic Dhammapadam* and *Sutta Nipata*. *Sanatsujaiya* forms a part of that same movement in the religious history of ancient India of which the *Gita* is another embodiment. The *Gita* is also of the numerous episodes of the Mahabharata and like the former appears for the first time in English language.

RAMANUJA ON THE BHAGAVADGITA

by : J. A. B. Van Buitenen

The author's main object is to present this commentary on the Gita to the public in as lucid a form as possible. In short introduction he has given an account of the various aspects of this text. In the first chapter the basic assumptions of Ramanuja's doctrine are sketched in outline and the attention is drawn to the parallelism between the relation of the Gita to the earlier Upanisads and that of Ramanuja to Sankara. The second chapter deals with the exposition of Gita in Ramanuja's system. In the third chapter he has sought to determine the relation of the Gita to the *Bhagavata* and their relative dates, in four in a brief account of Ramanuja's views on the doctrines of the Gita and in fifth a short exposition of Ramanuja's methods in commenting on his text. The author is confirmed in his belief that in many respects the study of Ramanuja's system, in its theistic aspects so frequently and so intimately akin to Christianity would lead a Western student to a deep comprehension of the Indian genius. Price Rs. 20.00

MOTILAL BANARSIDASS
DELHI : VARANASI : PATNA

PREFACE

The celebrated gospel of the Gītā, said to have been preached by Lord Kṛṣṇa on the battlefield of Kurukshetra to his companion Arjuna, and incorporated in the ancient Indian epic of the Mahābhārata by the great poet Vyāsa in his gifted language, occupies a unique place in world literature. In India particularly the Gītā has been accorded from ancient times a place of honour among the highest philosophical works by the side of the Upanishads. It is obvious that the nature of a work which has maintained its high status for centuries, and has evoked feelings of admiration and respect from diverse quarters in and outside India, must be an extraordinary one.

While numerous books have so far been written on the Gītā, the present work embodies a modest attempt, from a somewhat fresh angle, to ascertain the consistent central theme in the Gītā gospel. In saying so, however, the present writer has no intention to deny the debt of gratitude to those who have trodden the path before. And so, where in the course of the argument I have differed from any one of them, care has been taken to restrict the criticism only to the specific point at issue. The same writer criticised at one place on one point, therefore, may be found appreciated at another. The present writer on his part is not fettered in this attempt by exclusive allegiance to any of the previous sects or personalities in the field of Gītā interpretation.

The reader's attention may be invited here to the following point. The Gītā contains a discussion not only of the morality and immorality of action, of the right and wrong, duty and non-duty, but also of such problems as the origin and creation of the world. Following the general synthetic outlook of traditional Indian philosophy, the Gītā's author has also discussed such other topics in the course of his main

treatment of Arjuna's immediate problem concerning the good and the bad. It should not be overlooked, however, that the principal problem in the Gītā discourse is the ethical one. The present work contains in the first place a detailed discussion of the precise psychological state of Arjuna's mind in that extraordinary situation of his; and next of the gospel of Kṛṣṇa, principally from the standpoint of ethics without an independent significance being attached to its other aspects.

This work was originally published in the author's mother-tongue Marathi. Several appreciations of it from diverse quarters were accompanied by suggestions to translate it in English and Hindi. As a result this English edition has been laboriously prepared. In doing so, the chapters have been partially rearranged; some matter being dropped while some added, to suit such an English edition intended to have a far wider circulation. Of course the main argument remains the same.

A word about the Sanskrit terms occurring in the body of this book. I have specially retained them to maintain some direct contact with the original Gītā text. However I hope, after going through a few pages the reader will feel quite familiar with the recurring terms. Besides, there is also the glossary at the end.

I am deeply grateful to Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the world famous philosopher-statesman of India, for his kind foreword. I am conscious that it was only his reverence for the Gītā that induced him, to spare a little of his extremely precious time for going through this work, and also favouring me with some very valuable suggestions by way of guidance.

I am further grateful to the University Grants Commission of India and the Vikrama University (Ujjain), for publication aids along with the recognition of this thesis as "Learned Research Work". The Jabalpur University has also been kind enough to honour this work with a token aid.

In the end I have also to express my gratitude to the late Maharaja Yashwantrao Holkar of Indore, who in spite of his declining health went through the manuscript with great interest and actively encouraged the author. It is very unfortunate that His Highness is not alive to see this book in print.

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G.W. KAVEESHWAR

FOREWORD

By Dr. S. Radhakrishnan

Professor G.W. Kaveeshwar of Holkar College, Indore, has written an important book on *THE ETHICS OF THE GĪTĀ*. He has wide learning and he has used it to demonstrate his thesis that Arjuna was not inclined to take to *saṁnyāsa* but was tempted to abandon his duty. In the first chapter of the *Gītā* Arjuna says, "I do not long for victory, Kṛṣṇa, nor kingdom for us, O Kṛṣṇa, or enjoyment or even life". Madhusudana Saraswati commenting on this verse indicates Arjuna's desire to renounce the world, *saṁnyāsa-sādhana-vācanam*. It may not mean actually a desire to become a *saṁnyāsin* but only a disregard for worldly possessions, *aihikaphala-virāga*. There is no doubt that the *Gītā* teaches the performance of one's duty in the world. It also enjoins that this duty should be done in a spirit of detachment and dispassion. *Karmasaṁnyāsa* is not so much the abandonment of action, but it is the performance of action in the spirit of *saṁnyāsa* or renunciation. *Saṁnyāsa* is a quality of mind. It is freedom from hatred and desire. It is the spirit of *vairāgya*.

There are occasions when Kṛṣṇa asks us to prepare for the work of the world by retiring from the world. He advises Uddhava in the 11th skandha of the *Bhāgavata* 'A spiritual aspirant should not only give up the company of women but even the company of householders but sit in solitude, free from danger and meditate on me :

*strīṇām tat-saṁgīnām saṁgam tyaktvā dūrata ātmavān
kṣemam vivikta āśīnam cintayen mām atandritaḥ.*

The spirit of the *Gītā* is the performance of one's duty or *karma* in the spirit of *saṁnyāsa* or detachment and renunciation. If we have the right frame of mind, we can live in the world and work for the welfare of the world *loka-saṁgraha*. *Nivṛttirāgasya gṛham tapovanam* : For the man of detachment his home is the hermitage.

Even the attainment of wisdom is not inconsistent with work in the world:—

*vivekī sarvadā muktaḥ kurvato nāsti kartrā
ālāpavādam āśrītya śrīkṛṣṇa-jankau yathā.*

The purpose of the book is to show that we are not asked to give up work in the world. We are asked to participate in the work of the world with our minds free from egoism, desire, fear etc., and Professor Kaveeshwar has brought out this idea with learning and ability. In this connection he has also drawn a distinction between the *niškāma* and *kārya* aspects of the good act. I hope that this book will be read widely.

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yā subhravastrāyītā
yā vñāvaradaṇḍamaṇḍitakarā
yā śvetapadmāsānā
yā brahmācyutaśaṅkaraprabhītibhīr-
devaiḥ sadā vanditā
sā mām pātu sarasvatī bhagavati
niḥśeṣajādyāpāhā

‘‘May Sarasvatī, the Goddess of Learning, fair as the *kunda* flower, the moon or a spray of snow; clad in pure white garment; gracefully holding in the hand the divine *vñā* (musical instrument); seated on a white lotus; ever revered by gods like Brahmā, Acyuta (Viṣṇu), Śaṅkara and others; and who completely dispels all ignorance, graciously bless and inspire me.’’

PART FIRST

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ARJUNA

CHAPTER I

THE GREAT DEJECTION OF A GREAT SOUL

On the eve of the Gītā's birth.

The Gītā contains a unique conversation between Arjuna, the warrior with a virtuous sin-fearing mind, and Kṛṣṇa, his friend, philosopher and guide. The Kauravas having not only usurped unjustly the kingdom of the Pāṇḍavas, but also unceremoniously refused to return even an iota of it, the latter were left with no alternative but to fight. As is generally observed, the destruction of a mortal is preceded by the perversion of his reason; and the Kauravas too accordingly accepted the challenge of battle. Even Bhīṣma, the common grandfather, and Droṇa, the common teacher, arrayed themselves by the side of the usurpers on the field of Kurukṣetra against the righteous Pāṇḍavas. Both sides were fully equipped with men and weapons. As depicted in the epic plot of the Mahābhārata so marvellously by the world poet Vyāsa, it was not a mere affair between certain individuals, but a vast conflict between the eternal rivals—Justice and Injustice, Self-respect and Arrogance, Good and Evil, Truth and Falsehood, Self-defence and Aggression. Besides being a civil war from the national point of view, the principal combatants on both sides being near relations of each other descending from a common stock, it was at the same time a singularly unhappy internecine family strife too. That was a peculiar feature of that great battle.

Arjuna's plight at the last moment.

It was amidst such an extraordinary environment that the brave Arjuna was seated in his magnificent chariot drawn by excellent snow-white horses and driven by no less a charioteer than Lord Kṛṣṇa himself. When the battle was just at the point of commencement, Arjuna, desirous of having a last minute view of the opposing side, asked Kṛṣṇa to place the chariot for a while betwixt the rival armies. The latter

complied and addressed Arjuna with the words 'Behold, Oh Arjuna, these members of the Kuru family assembled (here for war)' (I/25). Immediately did Arjuna cast a glance around, and lo, what wonder of wonders! Seeing that vast gathering of his own kith and kin, friends, relations, preceptors bent on mutual slaughter, Arjuna's noble soul was stirred to its very depth and a sense of extreme dejection overwhelmed him! Not that he was by any means a stranger to the scene of battle; he was a tried undaunted warrior who had in the past made many a mighty foe lick the humble dust! But seeing in that fraternal fight the strange sight of his own blood relations, friends, equals, elders, respected preceptors, as also youngsters who should normally have received from him blessings for a long and happy life, arrayed in mortal combat against himself, his fearless heart shrank within! To wage such a war against one's own people for the worldly enjoyments of a throne and the like appeared to his mind a colossal sin; and completely weighed down with the thought "What a horrible sin we are about to commit under the blinding influence of utter selfishness", he laid down his bow and expressed to Lord Kṛṣṇa his plain refusal to wage that war! So engrossing a situation, so unexpected and thrilling a turn of events, and so touching yet psychologically accurate a description of the whole affair will hardly have a parallel in the field of philosophical literature!

Significance of Arjuna's dejection.

The discourse of the Gītā having had its origin in the above dejection of Arjuna, and its ethical views having been expounded for its removal, its importance for a correct appraisal of the Gītā ethics can hardly be over-emphasized. The analysis of Arjuna's psychology is indeed the foundation of the correct understanding of the ethics of the Gītā. It will hardly be possible to grasp the real significance of Kṛṣṇa's reply without a thorough and correct appreciation of the nature of Arjuna's basic problem, its precise psychological, intellectual and emotional setting, and the standpoint adopted by Kṛṣṇa himself with reference to it. As will appear from the succeeding chapters, the source of several erroneous

interpretations of the Gītā gospel can be traced to an incorrect analysis of Arjuna's mind. Fortunately, the Gītā has made available to us in Arjuna's own words a detailed accurate description of the state of his mind at that time. He in whose mind the great dejection and bewilderment had arisen was no mean mortal. He had the rare fortune of the association, friendship and affection of Lord Kṛṣṇa himself. And on what a sublime plane had that dejection arisen! It involved no anxiety about his own safety or death; no concern whatsoever about the final outcome of the battle. The anxiety of Arjuna was about the continuity of the family line and its moral wellbeing; his worry was about the possibility of losing the true good in a pursuit of worldly pleasures. It was indeed a matter of great fortune that none else than Kṛṣṇa himself was with him at that psychological and moral crisis; he alone could laugh as in ridicule (vide II/10) at that noble and selfless dejection, and after taking Arjuna through a lofty discussion of the highest principles extending over seventeen cantos could finally land him safely back on the hard ground of duty. A lesser personality would have easily given him some such reply in that situation: 'Right you are, Arjuna. What a great folly you were about to commit! Blessed are you to have this thought in your mind at this moment, when even the wise Yudhiṣṭhira forgot all about it in his lust for kingdom. It is indeed a heinous sin to fight with these relatives and worthy preceptors for the sake of ephemeral worldly possessions and pleasures. What to speak of the mere kingdom, even your very life deserves to be laid at the feet of the revered grandfather Bhīṣma; for you to aim pointed arrows at him instead would be a most abominable sin! Such behaviour towards one's worthies is entirely contrary to the Aryan way and will surely lead to utter degradation. It is an indication of sheer intellectual perversity. It is so good that you have thought of withdrawing from this battle ere it is too late. Come, let us explain all this to Yudhiṣṭhira, and were even he to remain adamant let at least you and me desert this field of battle forthwith. Let them then slaughter each other in our absence if they so like." But Kṛṣṇa did not say so. On the contrary, without losing sight of the final good of the entire creation, he turned

"The Lord said :—You are grieving over those that deserve no grief, and yet are uttering seemingly wise talk. The truly wise grieve neither over the retention nor the departure of life." Even if following the above contention, this verse is technically called the Gītā's introduction, nevertheless it will be obviously necessary to determine properly what things that deserved no grief Arjuna was grieving about, as also what sophistical arguments he was advancing at that moment. As will be seen later on, those that sought to explain this verse without duly attending to that previous portion arrived at incorrect interpretations of it, leading further to an erroneous idea about the central purport of the Gītā as a whole. There should therefore be little objection to regard this 'occasion' or 'context' as a part of the Gītā's introduction itself. If amongst the criteria for ascertaining the central idea, there is a separate mention of the 'context' apart from 'introduction', it may perhaps be possible to regard the opening account of Arjuna's grief and dejection as the Gītā's context instead of its introduction. But in the absence of any such separate mention, it would certainly be desirable to include that portion in the introduction, since it is hardly possible to arrive at a proper interpretation of verse II/11 and therefore of the Gītā discourse as a whole without its due consideration.

Whenever the expressions of some one other than the principal exponent himself are thus essential to understand the true purport of a composition, it is preferable to include them in the *upākrama*, without attaching special significance to the fact as to who actually utters them. Had the Gītā's author described Arjuna's dejection through the words of Kṛṣṇa himself instead of Arjuna, these very objectors would have included it in the Gītā's introduction. When one delivers a talk or composes a work independently by himself, he usually gives such context himself at the beginning ; in which case, therefore, the context is identified with the introduction and needs no special mention. However, where a talk is in the nature of a conversation, such a context may

Arjuna's hesitant mind towards that seemingly heinous and sinful war, and removed his blood-curdling dejection and bewilderment.

The Gītā's 'upākrama'.

In view of the great significance of Arjuna's initial dejection for a correct understanding of the Gītā ethics, his opening remarks are usually regarded as the *upākrama* or 'Introduction' of the Gītā. Tīlak¹ as well as Dr. Radhakrishnan² hold the same view. Some writers, however, raise a technical objection to it. Drawing a fine distinction that the opening portion, consisting of the first canto and first ten verses of the second, forms the 'occasion' but not the 'introduction' of the Gītā, they regard the eleventh verse of the second canto as its 'introduction' (*upākrama*). Their contention is that the *upākrama* of any composition, being its own opening portion, must be the expression of the same person; and that therefore the 'introduction' of the Gītā, which is the discourse of Lord Kṛṣṇa, must be traced in the opening words of Kṛṣṇa himself and not those of Arjuna, Dhṛtarāṣṭra or Sañjaya. Sankara himself starts his detailed commentary on the Gītā just from the eleventh verse of the second canto; and the above contention is in justification of that stand.

Now, whatever may be the strictly technical aspect of the matter, such an objection is inapplicable and undesirable with reference to the Gītā. The discourse in the Gītā being in the form of a conversation, and not an independent lecture or composition by itself, it would but be necessary for a correct appreciation of the opening words of Kṛṣṇa to study properly the question of Arjuna out of which it arose, whether that question is designated as the 'introduction' or given a separate appellation like 'occasion' or 'context'. This is how that verse runs :

*aśocyanam aśocastvaṁ
prajñāvādāmsca bhāṣase*

1. Vide his treatise on the Gītā, Chap. I para 11 (para 13 in Sukhtankar's translation).

2. The Bhagavadgītā, p. 66.

be expressed through the mouth of some one else than the main exponent himself. But it will be hardly proper on that account to exclude it from the *upakrama*. It must not be overlooked that the discourse of Lord Kṛṣṇa in the Gītā has directly arisen out of the specific question and situation of Arjuna at the moment. Any attempt to trace the central idea of that discourse without adequate attention to it will be hardly successful. The Gītā's author himself has not excluded the opening account of Arjuna's dejection from the Gītā as such; and there is also in vogue the long-established clear colophon at the conclusion of the first canto : "Here ends the first canto entitled 'the study of Arjuna's dejection', in the upaniṣad of the Bhagavad-Gītā—the philosophy of the *brahman*, the science of *yoga* and the dialogue between Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna".¹

Arjuna's mind as painted in the Gītā.

It is therefore of the utmost importance for every student of the Gītā to understand the true nature of this extraordinary dejection and bewilderment of Arjuna. But prior to its actual discussion, let us quote here in full its account as given in the Gītā itself, so that it will be more convenient for the reader to follow our discussion of it.

Having cast a glance at all those kinsmen standing in battle array in front of him,—

"Overwhelmed by extreme pity and dejection Arjuna said thus : Kṛṣṇa, seeing these kinsmen assembled here for war (1/28), my limbs quail, my throat is parched, the body trembles, and the hair stand on end ! (26). The skin feels a burning sensation ; the Gaṇḍiva bow slips from the hand ; I am unable to stand steady, and my mind is so to say helplessly whirling : (30). Keśava, I see (in connection with the ensuing battle) evil indications (omens, consequences). I fail to see any true good out of a slaughter of one's kinsmen in this war (31). (In these circumstances) I no more desire, Oh Kṛṣṇa, any victory, throne

1. *iti śrīmadbhagavadgītāśūpaniṣatsu brahmanividyāyām yogaśāstre śrīkṛṣṇārjunasaṁvāde arjunaviśādyogo nāma prathamō dhyāyah.*

and pleasures. (After slaying our own kinsmen in this war) what shall we do, Oh Govinda (Kṛṣṇa), with the kingdom or enjoyments or (for the matter of that even) life ? (What real good can these in such circumstances bring to us ?) (32). Those for whom (to be able to serve whom, to promote whose welfare) we should be desiring the kingdom, enjoyments and pleasures, are themselves standing in battle array (against us) forsaking their lives and riches (33). Preceptors, fatherly elders, son-like youngsters, and so also grandfathers, maternal uncles, fathers-in-law, grandsons, brothers-in-law and other kinsmen (34)—these, Oh Kṛṣṇa, I do not desire to kill, even at the risk of myself being killed, and that not even for the sake of mastery over the three worlds (heaven, earth and the under-world), what then to speak of the (mere) earth ! (35). What good shall we achieve, Kṛṣṇa, by slaying these sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra ? Nothing but sin shall accrue to us as a result of killing these, worst criminals though they are ! (36). Therefore it will not be proper for us to slay these sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra as also the other relatives of ours (arrayed here against us). For, how can we be happy, Kṛṣṇa, after having slain our own kinsmen ? (37). Even though these, with their hearts corrupted by greed, do not perceive the wrong involved in the annihilation of one's own family and the sin in hostility to friends (38), how can we, who clearly visualise that wrong in the destruction of one's own family, avoid a withdrawal from this sinful act ? (39). With the destruction of the family are lost its age-long traditions and customs, with the disappearance of which the entire family passes under the grip of unrighteousness (40). With the rise of unrighteousness the females in the family are corrupted, and when women abandon the path of virtue, there results a licentious intermixture of the various social classes (*varṇas*) (41). Such intermixture verily leads the family slayer and the family itself to hell ; and their (departed) forefathers being deprived of obsequial offerings of rice and water (on the part of these corrupted descendants of theirs) suffer a downfall. (42). Due to such misdeeds of the family-destroyers resulting in the licentious intermixture of the social classes, the age-old family rituals and caste customs are lost (43). We have been

hearing, Oh Kṛṣṇa" that those whose family rituals are uprooted are necessarily condemned to hell (44). Alas ! in our greed for the pleasures of kingdom we (have sunk so low as to) have become ready to slay our own kinsmen ! What a heinous sin we are bent upon committing ! (45). Even if these sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, armed with weapons, were to slay me in an unarmed unresisting state on this battlefield, that should be better for me (rather than myself slaying them) (46).

Saṅjaya said : So saying, Arjuna with his mind struck by grief, discarded his bow and arrows, and mutely sank in his seat in the chariot on that battlefield ! (47).

SECOND CANTO

Saṅjaya said : To Arjuna thus overwhelmed by pity, with eyes full of tears and deeply dejected, Kṛṣṇa replied thus (1) :

The Lord said : Arjuna, whence has this un-Aryan, unheavenly and disgraceful stain visited you (entered your heart) at this moment of crisis ? (2) Cast away unmanliness, Oh Arjuna; it does not become you. Shake off this wretched faint-heartedness, Oh conquerer of the foes, and stand up (for this war) (3).

Arjuna said : How shall I aim, Oh Kṛṣṇa, arrows on the field of battle at Bhīṣma and Droṇa—those who deserve to be worshipped instead ? (4). It would be good even to fill the belly in this world with alms obtained by begging instead of slaying these venerable elders. By slaying these elders, who have turned slaves of wealth, we would be securing only blood-stained pleasures, and that too in this life alone, (with no good whatsoever in the life hereafter) (5). We know not what would be better for us—whether to conquer these foes or be conquered by them. These sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, after slaying whom we would not desire (even) to live, are themselves here arrayed against us (for war). (6). My mind (reason) having been overwhelmed by poorness of spirit, I feel quite bewildered about my duty (or about the right and wrong) at this time; I therefore seek your guidance. Pray, tell decisively what is good for me. I am your disciple and have approached you; please show

me the right path (7). For I fail to see anything which would drive away this grief of mine that is drying up the very senses, even if I were to obtain an unrivalled and prosperous kingdom on this earth or mastery over the Gods. (8).

Saṅjaya said : Having thus addressed Kṛṣṇa, the mighty Arjuna said to him "I shall not fight", and remained silent. (9). To him thus dejected just in the midst of the rival forces Lord Kṛṣṇa, smiling as it were, replied thus : (10)

The Lord said : You are grieving over those that deserve no grief, and yet are uttering seemingly wise talk. The truly wise grieve neither over the retention nor the departure of life. (11)."

The above verses present a direct picture of the then mental state of Arjuna. Of these, four and a half containing the observations of Saṅjaya, three of Kṛṣṇa, while the remaining twentythree and a half express the wordings of Arjuna himself. Relying primarily on these verses, and also taking into due consideration the rest of the Gītā, we have now to formulate the correct psychology of Arjuna in this First Part of this work. Thereby one can grasp the true nature of that attitude of Arjuna consisting of a state of suspense, dejection and utter bewilderment. The reader will easily see from the succeeding discussion how several writers have attributed to Arjuna various good or bad dispositions which as a matter of fact were not present in his mind at that time. As said in the beginning of this chapter, the dejection of Arjuna was an extraordinary dejection of a great personality. That dejection of his and the ordinary dejection of the common man are poles asunder. When the true nature of that dejection, arising in the mind of a great warrior at the vital moment of duty from a personally selfless and noble standpoint shall be first ascertained properly, will it be possible to grasp the true message of ethics preached by Lord Kṛṣṇa for its removal.

the remainder of his earthly existence only in the calm contemplation of (final) knowledge. They believe that the chief teaching of the Gītā also is in the same direction. On the contrary, its central message, according to the other school, is that not only the seeker but even the enlightened liberated soul should remain performing action till death in an unattached manner; that no attempt should ever be made for an 'actual' renunciation of action, it being enough to renounce the desire for its 'fruit'. The leadership of the first school goes to the well-known mediaeval scholar Śaṅkarācārya, while that of the second to the modern scholar-politician the late Bāl Gangadharā Tilak.¹ Both were personalities of a very high order, and the writings of both are indicative of profound intelligence and learning, with an earnest concern for the moral reformation of society.

The advocates of the school of action have shown considerable awareness of the fact that Arjuna's opening standpoint must necessarily be contrary to the final teaching of the Gītā, and have made ample use of it in turning the tables against the other school. The view that the central teaching of the Gītā is the lifelong performance of (non-egoistic) action naturally receives good support in the assertion that Arjuna in his opening phase of dejection had turned towards the actual renunciation of all action as such. Against the background of his alleged opening leanings in that direction, Kṛṣṇa's advice of the path of action obviously appears appropriate; and one finds an excellent reconciliation between the Gītā's introduction and conclusion. Kṛṣṇa, according to this interpretation, skillfully induced Arjuna to return to the path of action from that of its renunciation, to which he was turning due to the loathing produced by a direct sight of the impending fratricidal war. But it is obvious that all this

1. Written originally in the Marathi language, translations of Tilak's treatise (*Gītā-Rahasya*) have appeared in many Indian languages; and also one in English by Mr. B.S. Sukhtankar (published by Tilak Brothers, Poona, 1935). However, for several reasons, I have here preferred my own translations. But to enable the location of each quoted passage in any of the available editions, I have specified its chapter and para, or else the Gītā verse concerned. While Śaṅkara refers to some ancient attempts to interpret the Gītā in terms of the school of action, none of them being now extant, Tilak's attempt remains a landmark in that field.

CHAPTER II

ARJUNA AND THE 'SANNYĀSA' SCHOOL

It is obvious that in a conversation the principal aim of any rational reply must be to establish some proposition which the questioner originally denies or at least does not accept. It is hardly possible that Kṛṣṇa would have expounded seventeen chapters of the Gītā—and that at the most critical moment of a fierce conflagration on the field of battle—just to convince Arjuna of a standpoint already acceptable to him from the start. Any attempt to trace the central teaching of the Gītā, therefore, in a view which Arjuna was himself advocating, or at any rate not disputing, would be tantamount to accusing its author of knocking at an open door. The principal lesson of the Gītā can only be such as was not acceptable to Arjuna in his opening phase of mind or about which he was then entertaining a doubt.

Two main trends of Gītā interpretation: 'Sannyāsa' and 'Karma'.

Thus we should expect in the preliminary phase of Arjuna's mind some tendency contrary to what can be accepted as the principal message of the Gītā. Only then can the latter possess any real meaning and significance; otherwise it will merely amount to a redundant attempt to convince the converted. Several commentators of the Gītā are not quite unmindful of this. If we review the attempts made so far to interpret the central gist of the Gītā—keeping aside individual or minor attempts—two main opposing schools of thought present themselves before our sight: that of the actual renunciation of action (*karma-sannyāsa*) and the other of its performance. Both see in the Gītā a support for their respective standpoints. According to the former school, though it is necessary for the seeker of knowledge to perform action, the realised soul should in the post-enlightenment stage definitely relinquish all of it. Considering it an obstacle or at any rate a useless appendage in the path of Liberation, such a one should instead pass

argument is based on the assumption that in his opening phase of doubt and dejection Arjuna had in fact turned towards the latter path.

Both, however, trace the 'Sanyāsa' view in Arjuna's mind.

But before that, it will be interesting to note here that it is not only the followers of the school of action who carry this impression about Arjuna, but their opponents viz. the advocates of the *sanyāsa* school too! In the hands of the former, as said above, it is at least consistent, if nothing more, with their idea of the gist of the Gītā. But it is surprising that the other school too should maintain the same stand about the opening phase of Arjuna's mind, which is not even consistent with its general thesis that the central teaching of the Gītā gospel is in the line of the *sanyāsa* path. For, if Arjuna himself was from the start already inclined towards that very path, what sense could there have been in preaching the same again to him through the entire Gītā discourse? Does it not reduce the Gītā to a redundant attempt to prove what was not in dispute at all? But on such an objection being raised, instead of realising that there is something wrong in their interpretation of the opening phase of Arjuna's mind (or else in their idea about the central teaching of the Gītā), the advocates of the *sanyāsa* school started advancing all the more flimsy arguments in support of their stand, thereby providing a very good target indeed for their opponents.

While the Gītā's conclusion points unmistakably to the performance of the act of war, these advocates of the view that it teaches the abandonment of all action, began to urge the following defence. Arjuna, they said, had no doubt turned towards the *sanyāsa* path at the start, but as he was not possessed of knowledge, Kṛṣṇa regarded him as unfit for it, and therefore directed him to the path of action; but for the knowers or the enlightened ones there has been prescribed in the Gītā nothing but *sanyāsa*. However, can it be maintained that Arjuna remained ignorant even after so intimate an association with Lord Kṛṣṇa himself and the unique privilege of listening to the most sublime knowledge from the

Lord's own lips? Could not even the divine vision of the *visvarūpa* (Final Reality in the universal form),¹ beyond the ken of even the sages and monks, wipe out the ignorance of Arjuna? But let alone Arjuna for the moment. In the Gītā Kṛṣṇa clearly says that even he performs actions (for the guidance of mankind); is it because he considers himself ignorant and unfit for *sanyāsa*? Besides, the Gītā also says that king Janaka and others secured Liberation through action; how can ignorance be reconciled with Liberation? A host of objections can be raised against the above argument of the *sanyāsa* school. Nor have the advocates of the school of action spared it in this respect.² But even though that criticism may be well founded, it does not by itself render correct the stand of the school of action itself—both in respect of the psychology of Arjuna as also the theme of Kṛṣṇa. It will therefore be proper to consider independently and critically the view, by whomsoever expressed, that the *sanyāsa* school had dawned in Arjuna's mind at the start of the Gītā conversation. But before actually embarking on that task, let us see some typical illustrations of the expression given to this view by eminent writers.

Thus writes Tilak: ".....a glance at the 'introduction' and 'conclusion' of the Gītā will show that it was to turn him to his duty as a member of the warrior class that the Lord preached the Gītā to Arjuna who, just before the actual commencement of that war while both the armies were arrayed for battle on the field of Kurukṣetra and were about to open the fight, suddenly started high-sounding philosophical sophistry and being overcome by dejection BECAME READY TO ADOPT *SANYĀSA*."³ "When, assailed by the doubt whether it was proper or not to wage that horrible war involving a slaughter of elders, preceptors, as also all kings and brethren with his own hands, Arjuna became ready to abandon the war and adopt *sanyāsa*."⁴ ".....the gospel of the

1. Vide eleventh canto of the Gītā.

2. See, e.g. Tilak, chapter XI paras 6 and 11 and comments on verses III/17-24.

3. *Ibid*, chap I para 11 (para 13 in Sukhtankar's translation). Capital mine.

4. *Ibid*, chap. III para 1.

Gītā has been expounded just to explain these points to Arjuna who had become ready to adopt *sanyāsa*.¹ Finally there is one more clear observation: "There are two modes of leading the life in this world,—*sanyāsa* and *yoga*. Out of them, it was the *sāṅkhya* or *sanyāsa* school in consideration of the practice of which Arjuna had become ready to abandon that war and start begging..."²

Now, see the observations of those looking at the Gītā from the viewpoint of the *karma-sanyāsa* school as advocated by Śaṅkara. Madhusūdana writes in his commentary on verse II/6: "Thus while in the first canto there is a suggestion of the preparatory means for *sanyāsa* on the part of Arjuna, in the second canto there is his advocacy of *sanyāsa* itself as suggested by the life of beggary through the words *śreyo bhoktūṃ bhaiṣyamapi*."³ A recent follower of the school writes, "Arjuna had become ready to abandon the war which was his own duty and to swallow the crumbs of beggary, i. e., to accept the life of those who pursue knowledge as the only ideal of life. He was regarding action which was his own duty as a heinous thing and the wholehearted pursuit of knowledge as the highest thing."⁴ And again: "Arjuna's mind had come to regard the acceptance of *sanyāsa-āśrama* as the best thing; but the Lord rebuked him by saying that it was not his duty but that of another's; in spite of which, however, he would not discard the idea that *sanyāsa* was best."⁵

Besides the authors specifically quoted above, numerous others also have put forward the same view. While differing in their general standpoint regarding the interpretation of Kṛṣṇa's discourse in the Gītā, they nevertheless agree in expressing the idea that Arjuna's dejection, problem and *moha* had its origin in the *sanyāsa* view. Amongst the other eminent writers advocating this idea, mention may here be made

1. *Ibid.*, chap. XI para 5.
2. *Ibid.*, comments on verse II/38. See also chap. XIV para 3.
3. *itiprahamaṇḍalyāyārthaḥ sa sanyāsa-āśhanasūcanam, asmīntadyāye śreyo bhoktūṃ bhaiṣyamapi' ityatra bhikṣāryopalakṣitaḥ sanyāsaḥ pratipādito.*
4. Bāpat : Bālābhojini, (Marathi) Introduction, p. 27
5. *Ibid.* p. 41.

of Śrī Aurobindo¹ as well as Dr. Radhakrishnan.² Let us now therefore proceed to carefully scrutinise this viewpoint concerning the psychology of Arjuna, and to ascertain how far it can be justified by a reference to the Gītā itself.

Three meanings of 'Sanyāsa'.

There are three current meanings of the word *sanyāsa*. According to the first it means primarily the abandonment of private residence and family connections, accompanied by a change in the external dress—the donning of a saffron robe with the bowl in hand. One so dressed, though with worldly attachment at heart, is called *sanyāsin* in the ordinary parlance; the saffron robe being specially associated since long with the *sanyāsa* way of life.³ Besides, even if an individual sincerely resolves to tread the *sanyāsa* path by renouncing the worldly life, it does not follow that from the very start he develops a complete attitude of inner renunciation and sense control. Though not a hypocrite, he may be a sincere pilgrim honestly attempting to ascend slowly the difficult mount of complete inner renunciation. In course of time that attitude may develop within him; but they start calling him a *sanyāsin* from the time he abandons the worldly home and family, shaves his head, dons the saffron attire and depends for his maintenance on public charity. A *sanyāsin* however may not be confused with a beggar or mendicant as such. While many a beggar is not a *sanyāsin* in the above sense, many a *sanyāsin* instead of literally holding the bowl and begging from door to door lives in a temple, monastery or the like under the benefit of some charitable

1. *Essays on Gītā*, First Series, pp. 78-79.

2. The *Bhagavad-Gītā* pp. 66-67; see also p. 69 lines 6-7.

3. The reference here is to the *āśramas* i.e. modes or stages or walks of life. The traditional Hindu ethics divides normal human life into four such stages: (1) *brahmacarya-āśrama* i.e. the premarital stage of celibacy, covering childhood and adolescence, to be devoted to education under a teacher. (2) *gṛhastha-āśrama*, the stage of the householder—of youth and married life—devoted to acquiring and enjoying wealth. It is the active family life. (3) *vānaprastha-āśrama* i.e. the stage of retirement, meditation and social service. (4) *sanyāsa-āśrama*, i.e. the stage of complete withdrawal from family life, residential house, property and relations. This involves even a change of dress—donning the saffron robe. This stage is meant for a complete renunciation of the worldly affairs and concentration on the spiritual side.

arrangement—which may in a sense be perhaps said to mean a life of begging. But even if the *sannyāsa* walk of life is thus taken to imply necessarily a life of beggary, it is important to note here that the life of beggary is not a sure indication of the *sannyāsa* walk of life, and that therefore every one who begs is not a *sannyāsin*.

Apart from this external implication of the word, it signifies in the second place a complete inner renunciation of the worldly pleasures and enjoyments. Just as a man, who is outwardly a *sannyāsin* may not be so inwardly, the reverse too is possible. The history of Indian culture is not without illustrations of persons who, while to all outward appearance leading the common householder's life, possessed at heart a true attitude of renunciation. According to the second sense, *sannyāsa* can be found as much in the followers of the *sāṅkhya* view of actionlessness as in those who follow the path of action; as much in a monk like Śuka as in a king like Janaka.¹ 'The person of stabilised reason,' described in the conclusion of the second canto of the Gītā, whether supposed to be a follower of this school or that, is a *sannyāsin* in this sense. In the fifth canto the Lord observes :

*jñeyah sa nityasannyāsi
yo na doṣeṣu na kāṅkṣati
nirduḥkhaḥ hi mahābāho
sukham bandhātpramucyate. V/3*

"He who neither hates nor desires anything should be regarded as a permanent (settled) *sannyāsin*; one who is free from the dualism (of desire and hate, of attraction and aversion) is easily released from bondage (of the worldly life)."

The third meaning of *sannyāsa* is the above-referred *sāṅkhya* school of the elimination of action as such, the path of *Karma-sannyāsa* or total renunciation of all action, accompanied by complete absorption in the contemplation of Knowledge alone. It maintains that though action may be necessary for the seeker during the preparatory period for the soul's purification and enlightenment of the reason,

1. See Tilak : comments on verse XII/19.

nevertheless the real nature of the ultimate end of human life is knowledge as such; not action, but the total absence of it.

Thus the word *sannyāsa* can have three meanings : the *sannyāsa* walk of life, marked chiefly by the saffron robe; secondly, the *sannyāsa* attitude, marked by complete *vairāgya* i. e., elimination of all egoistic attachment and renunciation of worldly enjoyments; and lastly the *sannyāsa* school, marked by a faith in the philosophical doctrine of the renunciation of all action as such. Of these, the first may sometimes be found without the second and the third; or again, the attitude of renunciation may be met with without the other two aspects. Those who trace the idea of *sannyāsa* in Arjuna's preliminary frame of mind often confuse these three senses of the word, without caring to draw a proper distinction between them; though usually they are found to attribute to Arjuna the *sannyāsa* view in the last of the above senses.

It is, however, proposed to show here the absence of that view in Arjuna's mind at that time in any of the three senses, thus leaving no room for doubt on the point.

Can the same Gītā praise and condemn 'sannyāsa' ?

While critically considering the statement that Arjuna's refusal to fight was based on the *sāṅkhya* view of the renunciation of action, one would like to raise the following objection at the very outset. Lord Kṛṣṇa has himself praised in very high terms the *sāṅkhya* school at several places in the Gītā. Can it then be consistently maintained that he would have strongly upbraided Arjuna at the very opening of his reply for having shown an inclination towards the very same view? See, for instance, the following clear observations in the fifth canto :

*sannyāsaḥ karmayogaśca
nirāstreyasakarāubhau.....V/2
sāṅkhyayogau prthagbālāḥ
pravradanti na paṇḍitāḥ
ekamaḍyāsthītiāḥ sanyag—
ubhayorvinate phalam V/4
yaisāṅkhyaiḥ prāpyate sthānam*

*tadvogairāpi gamyate
ekam sāṅkhyam ca yogam ca
yāh paśyati sa paśyati V/5*

“The paths of *sannyāsa* and *karma-yoga* both lead to the final spiritual good (salvation)-2. It is the ignorant, not the truly wise, that speak of *sāṅkhya* and *yoga* as different from each other; whoever completely pursues anyone of them realises the benefits of both-4. The followers of *yoga* attain the same goal as those of *sāṅkhya*; he knows truly who realises that *sāṅkhya* and *yoga* are one and the same-5.

Now, does it sound possible that the same Kṛṣṇa who speaks in such high tone about the *sannyāsa* view of the *sāṅkhya* school¹ would have himself condemned it in such strong terms as ‘unbecoming the Aryan culture, anti-heaven, disgraceful’ (vide II/2), if he had noticed Arjuna’s leanings towards it only a few minutes back? Even though in the second half of verse v/2 it has been said that “out of the two, the path of action is better than that of the *sannyāsa* of action”, nevertheless when one sees the above clear eulogy in favour of the latter school, it does not seem possible that just a little earlier Kṛṣṇa would have employed with reference to it so contemptuous a language as “unmanliness, wretched faintness of the heart” (II/3). Should a pursuit of the ‘salvation-securing’ *sāṅkhya* path result for Arjuna only in the miserable plight of a blood-curdling dejection and intellectual paralysing bewilderment? In short, looking to the above verses it does not seem tenable that Arjuna’s withdrawal from the battle field in that mood of grave dejection was the outcome of the *sāṅkhya* view of *sannyāsa*.²

Let alone however the remarks of Kṛṣṇa. But when he

1. See besides, verse XIII/24. In verse XVIII/19 too, the view is mentioned with respect. And in verse X/26 Kṛṣṇa has eulogised Kapil (founder of that school) by saying “amongst the enlightened ones I am the sage Kapil”.

2. Besides, if Arjuna’s *moha* was the outcome of the *sāṅkhya* view, and Kṛṣṇa’s idea was to free him from its influence, how is it that the latter opens his reply in the second canto with a commendatory exposition of the very same view? (vide II/39). Later on the *yoga* view preached by Kṛṣṇa and the *sāṅkhya* view are declared to be the same at bottom.

started praising the *sannyāsa* school during his discourse, should not at least Arjuna have protested as to why he had been condemned so severely at the start, when he was desiring to withdraw from the field just in consideration of the very same view? But he has nowhere expressed any such grievance. Nor is it that he humbly listened to the entire discourse of Kṛṣṇa in absolute quietness without raising a single question. Actually, he is a keen seeker after knowledge, who puts from time to time brilliant questions to the Lord, his friend, philosopher and guide, boldly charges him to give an unequivocal reply avoiding all contradiction and confusion, keeps his eyes wide open, has a keen intellect and critical understanding. And yet, as for Kṛṣṇa’s strong censure of Arjuna in the beginning of the second canto, the latter has nowhere sought its explanation. Had the *sāṅkhya* view been really predominant in his mind in the beginning, he would not have failed to do so.

Analysis of Arjuna’s remarks.

But let us now proceed to analyse minutely the very remarks of Arjuna to find out whether there appears in them any bias towards the *sannyāsa* school. The reader will do well at this place to have carefully before him the thirtyone verses quoted in the previous chapter. In the descriptive remarks of *Sāṅgya* himself (I/28 first half; I/47; II/1, 9, 10) there is nothing suggesting the presence of that view in Arjuna’s mind. Nor is there any such indication in the remarks of Kṛṣṇa (II/2, 3, 11); if anything they point, as seen just above, to the contrary conclusion. There remain the twenty-three and a half verses of Arjuna himself. These may be conveniently divided into five parts for purposes of the present discussion. In the first part may be included the opening three and a half verses (I/28 latter half, 29, 30, 31); in the second the next two verses (I/32, 33); in the third the fourteen verses thereafter (I/34 to 46; and II/4); in the fourth only one verse (II/5); and lastly in the fifth the remaining verses (II/6, 7, 8).

Out of these, in the opening as also the concluding portions Arjuna has given a clear picture of his physical and psychological state of tension, the bodily trembling and the

like, the great mental dejection, suspense and utter bewilderment. At its very start the cause for the great excitement is said to be 'the sight of these kinsmen assembled for battle'. There is no word in it indicative of the *sāṅkhyā* view.

No dawn of true renunciation in Arjuna's mind.

Let us now turn to the second portion consisting of the thirtysecond and thirtythird verses of the first canto. If it is at all possible to discern the attitude of inner renunciation (i. e. *sannyāsa* in the second of the above three senses) anywhere in Arjuna's mind, it is here. It would therefore be necessary to discuss them in details. In the first of these verses Arjuna says :

na kāñkṣe vijayam kṛṣṇa
na ca rājyaṁ sukhāni ca
kiṁ no rājyena govinda
kiṁ bhogairjīvitena vā. I/32.

“(In these circumstances) I no more desire, Oh Kṛṣṇa, any victory, throne and pleasures. (After slaying our own kinsmen in this war) what shall we do, Oh Govinda (Kṛṣṇa), with the kingdom or enjoyments or (for the matter of that even) life? (What real good can these in such circumstances bring to us?).” But these remarks express only a conditional readiness to forego the worldly pleasures under the stress of certain exceptional circumstances. And it would hardly be proper to infer from them an unconditional total renunciation of all desire for success, kingdom, pleasures, enjoyments or for the matter of that life itself, on the part of Arjuna. Siddhārtha, the son of king Śuddhodhana of Kapilavastu, saw but once the dreadful sight of disease, old age and death, and immediately there dawned within him a total unconditional aversion to all worldly enjoyments, and he left for the jungle to attain the state of true enlightenment. Had any such conversion really taken place in the mind of Arjuna? While it is not quite impossible for a sense of unqualified renunciation to be awakened as a result of just one single grave shock received in life, Arjuna's mind had not really passed through that stage. Madhusūdana sees in the above

verse an attitude of renunciation of worldly objects.¹ But had such an attitude really awakened in Arjuna's mind, as in the case of Buddha, Kṛṣṇa would surely not have condemned it as unmanly and un-Aryan.

The fact was that Arjuna had not completely lost all desire for the worldly enjoyments. But he had just one condition to impose. He did not wish to indulge in those pleasures after having slain his kinsmen with his own hands in the very process of winning those pleasures. Therein he visualised a most heinous sin. But this itself means that had any one indicated to him a way to those enjoyments without the sin of family slaughter, he would have been only too glad to follow it. Can it be said that one who refuses a marriage proposal only for fear of his father's wrath is influenced by any idea of lifelong absolute celibacy? Indeed the implication behind such a conditional refusal can as well be that he on his own part is not against the proposal, the only obstacle being the father's displeasure; and that if that hurdle could somehow be crossed he would be immediately prepared to take a wife. Having expressed in the thirtysecond verse his newly awakened loss of desire for the success, kingdom and the like, Arjuna makes it clear in the immediately following verse that the aversion is only conditional and not a permanent unqualified one. What is the good of enjoying the throne after slaying one's own blood relations? Being utterly confounded by this situation, and not because of any awakening of a sense of total renunciation of and aversion to the worldly objects, Arjuna lost for the moment the desire for them.

Kṛṣṇa's correct diagnosis.

Arjuna was rejecting the kingdom, enjoyments and the like just for fear of the sin of a family war. One simple remedy for this was to secure those objects without the evil of the fratricidal war. But the Kauravas had not yielded an inch in spite of a thorough pursuit of that remedy—even after an attempt for a peaceful settlement and compromise by Kṛṣṇa himself. Therefore the Lord now placed before

1. *aihitika-phala-virāga*. See his commentary on verse II/6.

Arjuna through the Gītā a different theme. Arjuna was really nervous, not so much for the death of his kith and kin, but rather for the accrual of sin involved in their slaughter by himself.¹ Perceiving this, Kṛṣṇa put his finger just on the source of Arjuna's bewilderment. There was no unqualified renunciation in his mind; nor had he any particularly soft corner for his kinsmen on the opposite side. The fear which was tormenting his soul was about the accrual of the heinous sin of a family war for one's own selfish ends. But if so, what if he could be convinced that there was no sin in the war on this particular occasion? Kṛṣṇa's idea proved more than correct. The one thing which he impressed foremost upon the mind of Arjuna in the very second canto was that no responsibility for the slaughter of the kinsmen would fall on Arjuna's shoulders in that war. And no sooner did the latter realise this, than the crushing burden over his conscience began to lighten. If one compares the extremely pathetic language in his opening address to Kṛṣṇa, with the increasingly bold and fearless tone of his later expressions, it will be clear that the warrior in him that had sunk almost to the last state at the initial stage has even by the middle of the second canto collected himself enough to make a free breathing and even to move the eyelids. Indeed, when Arjuna boldly put his first intervening question in verse II/54, it became obvious at that very stage that the patient was out of danger. By the beginning of the fifth canto he regained enough strength even to cross-examine the physician himself. It must however be borne in mind that this miraculous recovery was due more than anything else to the words *naivam pāpamaāpṛyaśi* ('by waging this war you will incur no sin') in verse II/38, that acted like life-giving nectar for his sinking sin-fearing heart. It may even be said in a way that from Arjuna's viewpoint these few words contain the substance of the entire Gītā discourse in a nutshell. And once assured in this respect he saw that terrible war through.

Thus there is no ground to assume the awakening of an absolute renunciation of all worldly pleasures and enjoyments in the mind of Arjuna. But even if that is assumed, it can

1. This has been amplified further in Chapter VII.

not prove by itself that he had entered the state of the renunciation of all action as advocated by the *sāṅkhya* school. As said previously, the attitude of renunciation of enjoyments is essential, not only under the *sāṅkhya* school but also under that of action. In the ideal life as visualised in the Gītā—whether it is deemed to be in pursuance of the school of action or some other—such a sense of renunciation is necessarily implied.¹ Therefore even if the dawn of such an unconditional attitude in the mind of Arjuna is admitted, that by itself would not mean that he had become a follower of the *sāṅkhya* school of actionlessness.

Arjuna opposed only one particular act.

Let us now turn to the above-said third division. In the 34th and 35th verses occurring in this portion he has taken a further step in clarifying his heart's agony, though in a negative form. He says therein : 'Preceptors, fatherly elders, son-like youngsters, and so also grandfathers, maternal uncles, fathers-in-law, grandsons, brothers-in-law and other kinsmen;—these, oh Kṛṣṇa, I do not desire to kill even at the risk of myself being killed; and that not even for the sake of a mastery over the three worlds (heaven, earth and the underworld), what then to speak of the (mere) earth.' Under no circumstances and for no inducement whatsoever, was he willing to perpetrate the 'heinous sin'. And after saying that, he has expounded this very idea right till verse II/4. He has painted therein the grave consequences of a family war.

But where does one find in it any indication of the *sāṅkhya* view of actionlessness? We nowhere discern in that lengthy chain of Arjuna's reasoning any suggestion that action in itself amounts to a bondage for the soul, that it is an obstacle in the path of the fulfilment of the human life, that all action whatever should be abandoned without any scruple. The fact is that his opposition was only to one specified act, and not

1. Vide Tilak's comments on verse XII/19. He says there that though the Gītā abounds in remarks in praise of the attitude of renunciation, that does not mean that it favours the *saṃnyāsa* view. But then, should not the same logic be applied when interpreting the mind of Arjuna also?

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to all acts. That one act was the particular war with his kinsmen at the time. He was only objecting to it; not even to all wars as such. And as for the other worldly acts, besides war, there was not even a distant idea in his mind at that time for their abandonment.

There is no reason to assume that Arjuna would have raised any such objection, had that war, though for worldly gains, involved no fight with his own family; or even though involving such fight, were it for some end other than selfish. His objection was only to the slaying of kinsmen, and that too for his own selfish ends. That veteran fighter of many a fierce engagement wavered on this particular occasion (due to the fear of sin), only because he saw his kinsmen arrayed against him. But for that, there would have been no hesitation in his mind even this time.

Similarly had the Kauravās, Bhīṣma and Droṇa been engaged in perpetrating injustice against some third party, Arjuna would have willingly hastened to fight even against them for the cause of justice, in order (in the words of the Gītā itself) 'to protect the righteous and to punish the evildoers' (IV/8). When serving under King Virāṭa, Arjuna had actually wielded his weapon against these very kinsmen in the discharge of his duty.¹ But the idea of using his might against his own kinsmen for the egoistic ends appeared loathsome to his mind. Amongst the kinsmen standing in battle array in front of him, he saw the members of his family, his erstwhile friends and associates as also his preceptors. A fight against the first would have brought upon his head the sin of family destruction, against the second the sin of hostility towards friends, and against the third the sin of the slaughter of preceptors. Even otherwise these are bad deeds by themselves; but when considered along with the selfish goal of a lust for kingdom, pleasures, etc., they appeared to Arjuna all the more loathsome and heinous. While he has used only the monosyllabic words *pāpam*, *pātakam*, *doṣa* (sin, guilt) when speaking of the war against the kinsmen without a reference to its motive (vide verses I/36, 38, 39),

1. Vide *Mahābhārata*, *Virāṭa Parva*.

as soon as he came to mention the selfish motive behind that war (as he thought it to be), out came from his lips most naturally the double word *mahat-pāpam* (heinous sin): "Alas! in our greed for the pleasures of kingdom we (have sunk so low as to) have become ready to slay our own kinsmen. What heinous sin (*mahat-pāpam*) we are bent upon committing"! (I/45) Again while referring to opposing the preceptors on the field of battle in verse II/5, Arjuna has asked in words expressive of intense loathing whether it was not after all intended just to secure worldly enjoyments. It shows what was really tormenting his conscience at the time. Any occasion to fight against one's kith and kin is in itself a very lamentable situation. And to do that for winning oneself a worldly kingdom and the like? Never will Arjuna do that. Just as a man suddenly springs back from the sight of a coiling black cobra, due not simply to fear but also horror and loathing, Arjuna's mind instantaneously drew back with extreme agony from the idea of that 'heinous sin'. And as the mind withdrew, the body immediately sank down helplessly on the very field where that war was to be fought!

It will be apparent from the above that in his opening argument Arjuna's mind was groping within the field of action itself; only about one particular deed had his reason lost the correct perspective. He was not then insisting on abandoning all action; but was thinking of avoiding only one act. And since that particular deed was at that juncture his essential duty, it would be more correct to say that he was turning towards the abandonment, not of action as such, but of his specific duty at the moment. In the succeeding chapters we are going to analyse in details that attitude of his. Even though later on the Gītā refers to the *sannyāsa* school, and compares it with the school of action, it would not be correct to say that the former attitude had from the beginning dawned in the mind of Arjuna and that Kṛṣṇa's discussion of that view was with reference to it.

Did Arjuna really desire the saffron robe and begging bowl?

We now turn to the fourth division of Arjuna's remarks.

It consists of the fifth verse in the second canto :

*gurūnahatvā hi mahānubhāvān
śreṣṭhā bhoktūṃ bhakṣyamapīṣha loke
hatvārthakāmānstu gurūṇihatva
bhūñjīya bhogānruḍhirapradighān* II/5.

"It would be good even to fill the belly in this world with alms obtained by begging instead of slaying these venerable elders. By slaying these elders, who have turned slaves of wealth, we would be securing only bloodstained pleasures, and that too in this life alone (with no good whatever in the life hereafter)." Those who feel that he was inclined towards the fourth stage of life—*sanyāsa āśrama*—see in this verse a support for that view.

But was Arjuna really intending even to merely adopt the fourth walk of life? All that he says is that even the life of beggary would be preferable to committing a family slaughter. As already pointed out above, the begging of alms does not necessarily indicate the *sanyāsa* walk of life. Madhusūdana finds a reference to that walk of life in this mention of alms.¹ But actually speaking, Arjuna has not expressed any desire to abandon his wives and sons, to shave his head, and to hold the staff and water pot in hand. King Hārīśchandra gave up his kingdom for the sake of truth, and without actually turning a *sanyāsin*, started a pursuit of the lowly life along with his wife and son; it is quite possible (even if Arjuna is supposed to have really wished to take to begging, which as shown below he did not) that Arjuna's idea too could have been to prefer even the mendicant's wretched life along with his family, rather than winning a kingdom through a slaughter of kinsmen.²

But let us put aside that consideration for a while, and

1. Vide his commentary on II/6 quoted before.

2. In fact the Pāṇḍavas, along with their mother, had actually resorted to beggary in the city of Ekacakrā, in *cognito*, after their narrow escape from being burnt alive in a house of lac specially designed by Duryodhana (vide *Adi-Parva*, Chapter 157). That beggary had nothing to do with the *sanyāsa* walk of life as such. Indeed it was during that period that they secured Draupadi as wife.

assume that the begging of alms is a necessary indication of the *sanyāsa* walk of life. The question, however still remains whether Arjuna has expressed any real willingness to do such a thing. One can not help exclaiming that writers on the Gītā have surprisingly misunderstood here the plain rhetorical expression of his. A simple illustration will help bring out the real idea of Arjuna. Imagine some one, greatly worried by the overwork and harsh treatment in his office, uttering in disgust that he would feel it better **EVEN** to starve or swallow poison than to serve in those circumstances; would it be rational to say that he is **REALLY** desirous of any such thing? The correct way to look at such an utterance is to take it just as a rhetorical expression, and to infer only that the individual is feeling extreme disgust for that service, but not any real liking for starvation, poison and the like. When Arjuna says from the bottom of his tormented heart that even to live on alms was preferable to the family slaughter, it only indicates his extreme feeling of loathing at that time for the fratricidal war, but not any real liking or readiness for the wretched life of beggary. In spite of this, however, we find Tilak saying: "It was to induce him to do his duty that the Gītā was preached to Arjuna, **WHO HAD BECOME READY TO START BEGGARY**, abandoning the war ordained for him in accordance with his own duties."¹ Several others also have said the same.

Significance of the preposition 'API' ('even')!

Is it not really a great wonder that Arjuna's plain meaning should be so misunderstood in spite of the fact that he has clearly employed the preposition *api* ('even') just adjoining the word *bhikṣyam* (alms)? This preposition is evidently intended for a comparison. Having mentioned one object in the opening part of a sentence, a speaker sometimes refers to another object in the latter part along with this preposition. When the former reference is of an affirmative nature, a real consent is indicated for the latter object qualified by this preposition. But when the former reference is of a negative type, the mention of the second object if qualified by this

1. *Op. cit.*: Introductory remarks to canto XVIII. Capitals mine.

proposition is only of a rhetorical nature ; and far from implying any real acceptance or consent with respect to it, only expresses with special emphasis the speaker's aversion towards the first. The following sets of propositions would illustrate this alternative use of the word 'even', as also a comparison of two objects without the use of it.

- (1) 'This' act is a good one ; EVEN 'that other' (i. e. 'that other' too) can be said to be good.
- (2) 'This' act is *not* a good one ; instead of (rather than) 'this', 'that other' act can be said to be good.
- (3) 'This' act is *not* a good one ; instead of (rather than) 'this', EVEN 'that other' act can be said to be good.

In these propositions the latter half of the first two is not of a mere rhetorical nature ; but conveys a real positive meaning of its own. That is to say, therein the speaker is expressing a real commendation or acceptance of 'that other' act. Thus, for instance, in the verse :

api cetsudurātāro

bhajate māmānanyabhāk

sadhureva sa mantavyaḥ

IX/30

"Even the worst of sinners, if devoted to me wholeheartedly, should be deemed a good person ; for his reason has (in that case) taken the right direction", the use of the word *api* (even) is of this type. The implication of this verse is that by wholehearted devotion to God the good man is of course liberated ; not only this, but even the worst of sinners too is thereby liberated. There is no rhetoric in this statement in either of its parts. When in such a comparative statement the two parts proceed in a common direction, affirmative or negative, there is no question of any rhetoric in the latter part. But when they run contrary to each other that question crops up. Therefore the latter half in the third of the above propositions should be considered only as a rhetorical expression (*arthavāda*). It only expresses more pointedly through a comparative reference the speaker's opposition to 'this' act referred to in the first part, but no real consent for 'that other' act.

The more emphatic the opposition in the first half, the more

clearly does the affirmation in the latter half fall under the category of rhetoric. For example, by enhancing still further the emphasis in the above third proposition, the following fourth variety can be obtained :

'This' act is *not* at all a good one (is absolutely worst) ; instead of (rather than) 'this', EVEN, 'that' other act may be said to be good.

Now, in such a proposition the commendation or consent in the latter half is wholly of a rhetorical nature, there being no intention of the speaker to regard it as literally true. It is intended only to make the uncompromising opposition in the former half appear all the more emphatic. The reader will easily notice that Arjuna's remark under consideration was not only not of the first two varieties, but not even of the third less emphatic one ; it in fact belonged to the last i. e., the fourth extreme type. And yet a surprisingly large number of writers is found to totally drop all reference to that proposition itself in their interpretation of the verse under consideration ; when the use or disuse of it, as shown above, makes such a great difference in the sense of the speaker. Whereas Arjuna's sense was clearly of the fourth variety, these writers unwarrantedly dilute it down to the second form, and therefore attribute to him a real liking for the beggar's life—and further for the *sanyāsa* walk of life. There was no desire at all at that moment in the mind of Arjuna for any dish of alms. On the contrary, there was a feeling of aversion. His remark only shows that he considered that war as worse than even what he most disliked to do i. e., if one might so put it, worse than the worst ; and is thus expressive of the extreme loathing with which he looked upon that war. And it naturally follows that he was quite prepared to pursue any other path which the Lord would have suggested to him so as to avoid both the detestable acts.

Injustice to Arjuna.

Need it be clarified as to why a super-warrior like Arjuna should have employed the preposition 'even' along with the mention of beggary, suggesting thereby nothing but its utter wretchedness in his eyes ? One can easily imagine how unbearable the idea of filling the belly with crumbs begged

from door to door must have been to the mind of such a warrior-prince as Arjuna. He expressed by way of rhetoric, and that too but once, the idea of begging taking special care to qualify it with the significant preposition 'even', only to depict in the blackest possible colour his loathing for that war with his own kinsmen. It being so, what a great injustice it must indeed mean to him to take literally his reference to alms, and say that he was ready to take to the mendicant's ways or wanted to enter the *sannyāsā* walk of life.

It may further be noted here that Arjuna has used the preposition *api* in this rhetorical manner, not only in the above verse, but in the following too, and that not once but twice:

etānna hantumicchāmi
ghnato'pi madhusūdana
api trāṭṭokyaṛājyaśya
hetoh kim nu mahikṛte I/35

"These, Oh Kṛṣṇa, I do not desire to kill, even at the risk of myself being killed, and that not even for the sake of a mastery over the three worlds (heaven, earth and the underworld), what then to speak of the (mere) earth." Will it be proper to overlook the preposition *api* in the expression *ghnato'pi*, and to say that he really longed to have his body cut to pieces on the battlefield in a state of utter non-resistance? Even here, the plain implication of the above verse is that actually there was in his mind nothing but contempt for such a kind of helpless death; but that as the last resort, and in total absence of any other alternative, he might have even preferred that to the proposed family slaughter. As a matter of fact, there was in the mind of Arjuna at that moment neither any allegiance to the *sāṅkhyā* school, nor any real wish to die the above death. All that he has done is to give vent in a heart-rending manner to his horror about the heinous sin of family slaughter, by making a rhetorical reference to alms and the said form of death.

And Arjuna has similarly used the same preposition again in the latter half of the above verse. It will be hardly proper to infer there that the kingdom of the earth or the three worlds had under all circumstances become undesirable

in his eyes. He says at that place that he would not do that fighting even for the sake of a mastery over the three worlds. Just as his real idea in verse II/5 is not that begging alms is good but that it is a wholly contemptible act, so this verse too shows not that he was regarding a mastery over the earth or the three worlds as undesirable, but that he was really considering it as most desirable. It is indeed because of this that he has mentioned it there for the sake of comparison. Madhusūdana thinks that the latter half of this verse points to the renunciation of all heavenly enjoyments on the part of Arjuna.¹ This, however, does not appear a sound view. No unconditional unqualified renunciation of the enjoyments either here or hereafter—essential for the pursuit of the *sannyāsa* mode of life—had dawned upon him at that time. His real implication is that though a mastery over the three worlds is so tempting a thing, even for its sake he would not commit that sinful slaughter of his own kinsmen. Suggesting in a rhetorical manner on the one hand a readiness even for the most contemptible things like a life of beggary and a helpless non-resisting death, and an aversion in the same fashion even towards the highly desirable objects like the mastery over the earth and kingdom of the three worlds, Arjuna has doubly expressed his utmost loathing for that war. He wanted to convey to the Lord his total unwillingness for that deed, notwithstanding any inducement of enjoyments or fear of suffering.

Unwarranted suggestion of bias towards 'sannyāsa'.

We may now sum up our present discussion. No real liking for a life of begging had arisen in the mind of Arjuna. Even if the contrary is granted, it does not by itself prove a readiness on his part to adopt the *sannyāsa* walk of life; because he has not employed any expression clearly indicative of such an intention. In the course of so extensive a self-expression, he could have easily used, had he so intended, some such word as *yati*, *sannyāsin*, *muni* (monk), or the like. Words like these actually occur in the Gītā later on. Further, even if it is held that being carried away by a

1. *Pāralaukika-phala-vivāḍa*. Vide his commentary on II/6.

momentary feeling of sudden disgust, he had really become ready to enter the *sanyāsa* walk of life—to don the cowl and hold the bowl—still that does not establish that he had developed the attitude of *sanyāsa*, i.e., complete inner renunciation. His longing for pleasures had not been rooted out; nor was he unconditionally disowning the same. The only thing was that he did not want to fulfil it at the price of the family war. And finally, as for the assertion that his aversion to that fight was due to his conviction in the school of the renunciation of all action as such, it is all the more inconsistent with the observations of both Kṛṣṇa as well as Arjuna.

While depicting the mind of Arjuna Śāṅkara says at the commencement of his commentary : “Having proceeded to the war of his own accord as becoming the duties of the warrior class, (Arjuna) shrank from it (at the last moment) due to his capacity of discrimination between the good and the bad being overwhelmed by dejection and *moha* and he turned to pursue a life of begging and the like, which was (not his own duty but) the duty of another (i. e. of the *brāhmaṇa* class).”¹ Further, deducing a general proposition applicable to all the common mortals from the illustration of Arjuna, Śāṅkara adds : “Similarly do all the beings with their hearts smitten by such weaknesses as dejection, *moha* etc., naturally abandon their own duty and pursue a forbidden line of action.”² The Ācārya has here laid at the door of Arjuna the twin accusations of the desertion of one’s own duty and the pursuit of a forbidden act which may be the duty for some one else, and points to Arjuna as an instance of these common infirmities of human nature. But of these charges the first is vague while the latter is groundless. Arjuna had not positively entered upon the forbidden acts of begging and the like even mentally, let alone physically. It is certainly incorrect to say that being overwhelmed by *moha* like an ordinary mortal he was enamoured of that act, or that

1. *śokamohābhyām hyabhibhūtaivicitrakaujñānoḥ svata eva kṣatradharma yuddhe pra rtho’pi tasmādyuddhātupararāma. paradharmatā bhikṣājñanādikam kartum pravartte.*

2. *tathā ca sarva-prāṇināṃ śokamohāditośaiṣṭacetanāṃ svabhāvata eva svadharmapharibhāgati praiṣṭiddhasevā ca syāt.*

he was ‘tempted’ to taste the crumbs of beggary.¹ Arjuna was no doubt overpowered at that time by intellectual bewilderment ; but that had nothing to do with the begging of alms. That bewilderment and confusion of his was different from that of the ordinary mortals. We shall discuss its nature in full in the succeeding chapters. But for the present let the reader’s attention be invited here to the following verses enough to throw necessary light on the nature of that bewilderment. In the concluding portion of the Gītā the Lord says :

yadahanikāramāśritya

na yotsya iti manyase

mithyaiva vyavāsāyaste

prakṛti-sthām nityokṣyati.

XVIII/59

svabhāvajena kaunteya

nibaddhaḥ svena karmaṇā

kartum nechasi yamohāt

kariṣyasyavaśo’pi tat.

XVIII/60

“Your insistence that you will not fight, born of the ego-sense, will be but hypocritical ; for your inherent nature (as a warrior) will be (internally) goading you on (to fight this war)—59. What you are refusing to do under the influence of *moha* (bewilderment), you may even happen to do, Arjuna, against your will, being bound by (the necessity of) the action arising out of your own nature—60”. Kṛṣṇa has appropriately described herein the restricted negative character of Arjuna’s bewilderment. Its scope was limited to the bare refusal to fight that war. It did not extend to the refusal to perform any action whatever. And further, it was not of such a compound nature as to include not only the abandonment of the war, but also in addition the acceptance of beggary, adopting the *sanyāsa* walk of life or pursuing some such line. Arjuna had not resolved in his mind any substitute for that act of war. Arjuna’s passing reference to beggary was meant only to emphasise his opposition to that war, and Kṛṣṇa too has viewed it in that same light.

1. Vide e. g. Madhusūdana (commentary on II/7) : *bhikṣācarye’r-junasyabhihāṣam.*

No such charge by the Lord himself.

This fact appearing from the concluding portion of the Gītā is also indicated by the following opening expressions of Kṛṣṇa. While describing to Arjuna the consequences of the proposed avoidance of that war, Kṛṣṇa says :

*aiha cettvaminimain dharmyam
saṅgrāmaṁ na karisyasi
tataḥ svadharmaṁ kīrtiṁ ca
hitvā pāpamavāpsyasi.*

II/33

*akīrtiṁ cāpi bhūtāni
kathayisyanti te'vyayām
sambhāvitāya cākīrti-
maraṇādatiricyate.*

II/34

*bhayaḍḍraṇāduparātāṁ
maṁsyante tvāṁ mahārathāḥ
yeṣāṁ ca tvam bahumatō
bhūtīvā yāgyasi lāghavam.*

II/35

*avācyavādānśca bahūn
vadiyanti tavāhitāḥ
nindantastava sāmāhṛīyaṁ
tato duḥkhataraṁ nu kim.*

II/36

“If you will not fight this righteous war you will fail in your duty, lose honour, and instead incur (nothing but) sin.—33. And besides, the public will forever recount your disgrace ; and to a man of honour bad name is worse than death itself.—34. The great warriors will think that fear did make you desert the field ; and those who have been holding you in high esteem will think light of you—35. And, further, your enemies will slander your prowess and utter about you all sort of unworthy non-sense. What can be more painful than that ?—36”. There is no reference herein either to a life of beggary or to *sanyāsa*. All that Kṛṣṇa has warned Arjuna is that the latter would earn a bad name as a cowardly person.

Now, as for the other accusation of the desertion of his own *dharma*, even that is vague or at any rate only partially true. Just as Arjuna's standpoint was not one of an opposition to all action as such, it was not even one of an opposition to all wars whatever. He was opposed only to that particular war involving a slaughter of his own kinsmen. It would therefore be doing injustice to him to say that he was seeking to run away from the entire duty (*dharma*) of the *kṣatriya* (warrior) class as such, when he was opposing only one particular war. In the mind of the emperor Aśoka, the tragic experience of only one war produced a permanent nausea for all wars as such ; nothing like it had however happened to Arjuna. He had no objection to war in accordance with the duties of the warrior class. He hated only a war with the following twin qualifications. He had no heart to fight, in the first place, against his own kith and kin ; and secondly, that too for his own egoistic ends. He saw no real happiness in the bloodstained worldly pleasures won through a pyrrhic victory after slaying one's own people with one's hands. And as for securing thereby some good beyond the grave, after having slaughtered the kinsmen for one's selfish ends, having perpetrated the sins of the destruction of one's family, hostility to friends and killing revered preceptors, what reward can really accrue after death—Liberation, heaven or hell ? In short, he saw in that war no real good whatever here or hereafter ; and consequently expressed his refusal to fight that particular war accompanied by such special characteristics, and not all wars whatever which it is the duty of the warrior class to fight. Could Arjuna have been indifferent towards the duties of his class, when he has himself expressed a concern for maintaining the purity of that class (vide I/41) ? A charge of opposition to the duties of the warrior class as such would be singularly improper against one, who is himself insisting on the unbroken continuity of even the minor traditional rites and rituals prevalent in his family (vide I/40, 43). In verse I/43 he has actually expressed his clear heartfelt concern for the age-old rituals and customs of the warrior class itself—(*śaśvatāḥ jātūdharmāḥ*). In fact, he had a very real and earnest concern in his heart for the customs, virtues and duties pertaining to his family, class,

clan and the like ; and had no intention whatever of throwing them overboard. If the word *dharma* is taken in the sense of his particular duty at that moment, it could be said that he was turning towards a desertion of it ; but if that word is taken to connote the broader meaning of the entire duties of the warrior class as such, the above charge would be unwarranted.

We have so far examined the mind of Arjuna from the viewpoint of the *saṃnyāsa* school. In the chapters to follow we are going to do the same from a different angle of vision.

CHAPTER III

‘KĀMA’ AND ‘MOHA’

Absence of ‘kāma’ in the stand of Arjuna.

It is often urged that the central doctrine preached in the Gītā discourse is that of a life of *niskāma* (non-egoistic) or *anāsakta* (non-attached) attitude. The question however arises as to how far did the then mental state of Arjuna call for such a prime emphasis on the teaching of the non-egoistic attitude. The emphasis could be justified if Arjuna’s mind was at the time overpowered by *kāma*. As a matter of fact, however, one does not discern any tendency towards *kāma* in that state of Arjuna’s mind, in that faintheartedness of his, or in his line of argument either. Whether the *sāṅkhyā* path of knowledge had dawned upon him or not, it seems certain that at that time no disposition that can be appropriately described as *kāma* was active in his mind. It is certainly worth noting that the sudden weakness which entered his mind, and due to which he was talking of the desertion of his duty of that war on the very edge of it—a weakness which the Lord condemned at the outset in the most contemptuous terms as ‘unmanliness’, ‘stain on character’, ‘faint-heartedness’—is not described in the Gītā itself in terms of *kāma*. In the Gītā, that weakness is throughout termed as *moha* and not *kāma*. We shall see in the following pages the important distinction and inter-relation between these two mental states, the precise reason why the author of the Gītā has very appropriately employed the word *moha* in this connection, and its significant effect on the ascertainment of the central message of the discourse. Let us, however, first observe how the Gītā itself has repeatedly used the word *moha* with reference to that mental state of Arjuna.

Clear mentions of ‘moha’.

At the very outset, while concluding the detailed description of his mental tension, Arjuna has aptly used for himself the adjective *dharmasammūḍhacetāḥ* (II/7). It means one with

his mind utterly bewildered or confused in the matter of duty and non-duty, right and wrong; the word *sammūḍha* being related to the word *moha* and meaning 'overpowered by *moha*'.

Further, referring to the slaughter of his kinsmen—i.e. their death at his own hands—due to which Arjuna was losing his heart for that war, Kṛṣṇa says :

dehīnō'sminyathā dehe

kaumāraṃ yauvanam jarā

talhā dehāntara-prāptir-

dhīrastatra na muhyati. II/13

‘Just as the embodied soul passes in this body through childhood, youth and old age, so also does it undergo a change of body (popularly known as death); the self-possession feels no *moha* about it.’ Here also by the last word in the verse, Kṛṣṇa has suggested to Arjuna that the latter’s *moha* at the apprehended change of bodies of his kinsmen at that time was not an indication of wisdom. After a few more verses the Lord says to Arjuna quite plainly :

yadā te mohakalilam

buddhiruyatitarisyati

tadā gantāsi nīrvedam

śrotavyasya śrutasya ca. II/52

‘When your reason shall extricate itself from the muddiness of *moha*, you will feel indifference towards whatever has been heard and has to be heard’. The word employed here also is *moha* and not *kāma*.

That the extraordinary tension in Arjuna’s mind on the eve of the Gītā discourse was of the nature of *moha*, and not *kāma*, was clearly recognised by Kṛṣṇa as well as Arjuna himself; and the former word is therefore found repeated in the Gītā time and again. In the fourth canto we come across the following unambiguous reference to that state of Arjuna’s mind :

yaj-jñātvā na punarmoham-

evam yāsyasi pāṇḍava

IV/35

‘Having obtained that final knowledge, Arjuna, you will no more be liable to any such *moha*’. And now look at the following words of Arjuna too, quite in accord with those of Kṛṣṇa :

mādanugrahāya paramam

gubyanmadhyātmasanijñitam

yattvayoktam vācstenā

mohā'yam vigato mama. XI/1

‘As a result of this supreme secret of the essential nature of reality, so obligingly related by thee for my good, this *moha* of mine has vanished.’ The reader will also be reminded here of the following verse already quoted at the end of the last chapter : ‘What you are refusing to do under the influence of *moha*, you may even happen to do, Arjuna, against your will, being bound by (the necessity of) the action arising out of your own nature.’ (XVIII/60) And finally when one looks at Kṛṣṇa’s question and the reply of Arjuna at the fag end of the discourse, no room whatever would be left for any doubt on this point. The Lord asks :

kaccidatācchrutam pārtha

tyayai kāgreṇa cetasā

kaccidajñānasam mōhaḥ

pranaṣṭaste dhanañjaya. XVIII/72

‘Have you listened with full concentration, Arjuna, to (all) this (that I have expounded so far) ? Has your *moha*, born of ignorance, been dispelled completely ?’ Arjuna, the best of pupils, gives the reply :

na śto mōhaḥ smṛtir labdhā

tvatprasādānmayācṛuta

sthitō'smi gatasandehaḥ

karisyē vacanam tava. XVIII/73.

‘Thanks to thine grace, Kṛṣṇa, my *moha* has been dispelled, and I have regained the memory (of my duty); all the doubt in my mind having been removed, here do I stand

ready to follow your advice." Arjuna does not say that he has been freed from *kāma*, that he has got rid of all egoistic attachment for the fruit of action, or that he has attained the attitude of inner renunciation. The principal idea in the above verses is that the *moha* (bewilderment) about duty and non-duty, of the nature of ignorance, that had cropped up in his mind and made him oppose that war which was his essential duty at that moment, was removed and consequently he was ready to perform that duty.

Gītā's differentiation between 'kāma' and 'moha'.

Nor can it be contended that the Gītā, not drawing any hard and fast distinction between *kāma* and *moha*, describes the mental state of Arjuna in terms of the latter just in a general manner, and not so as to differentiate it specifically from the former. For, the Gītā itself explains in clear terms the distinction between the two. Describing their characteristics separately, it accurately depicts their respective effects on human conduct. Not only this, the effects of *moha* as described therein tally with the mental state of Arjuna under consideration, which makes us realise the precise purpose behind the Gītā's employment of that very expression with reference to Arjuna's mental state.

On this point the exposition in the fourteenth and eighteenth cantos is of particular significance. Its perusal clearly shows that in the view of the Gītā, *kāma* is related to the quality of *rajas*, while *moha* to that of *tamas*. Due to the tendency towards *kāma*, produced by *rajas*, a man becomes attached to selfish fruit and therefore runs after the performance of action. *Tamas* produces evils of the *moha* nature such as laziness, intellectual confusion, lack of desire for proper action, dejection, grief, desertion of duty and pursuit of wrong action. Due to the influence of *kāma*, one feels attracted towards (non-forbidden) acts out of an egoistic attachment for their fruit; it is the result of *rajas*. On the contrary *tamas* produces effects of a different kind. Saying that he was proceeding to relate the most sublime knowledge, Kṛṣṇa describes in the fourteenth canto the soul-binding character of the three-qualified *prakṛti* (nature) created out of himself. Therein after first mentioning the power of *sattva* to produce enlightenment,

he turns towards the other two qualities and says :

<i>rajo rāgātmakam viddhi</i>	
<i>trypāsāṅgasamudbhavam</i>	
<i>tannibadhnāti kaunteya</i>	XIV/7
<i>karmasaṅgena dehīnam.</i>	
<i>tamastvejñānaṁ niddhi</i>	
<i>mohanam sarvadehinām</i>	
<i>pramāḍālayanidrābhis-</i>	
<i>tannibadhnati bhārata.</i>	XIV/8
<i>sattvam sukhe sañjayati</i>	
<i>rajaḥ karmāṇi bhārata</i>	
<i>jñānamāvṛtya tu tamah</i>	
<i>pramāde sañjayatyuta.</i>	XIV/9

"Know that *rajas* has the nature of longing (affection) and results in craving and attachment; it binds the person, oh Arjuna, to attachment for action (the egoistic desire for the performance of—unforbidden—acts)—7. But know that *tamas* is born of ignorance and leads all persons to *moha*—tempts them to the wrong path; it binds them with *pramāda*, indolence and drowsiness¹—8. While *sattva* produces attachment for happiness, and *rajas* for action, *tamas* by shrouding knowledge leads one to *pramāda*—9".

Just as the symptoms of a specific disease in a standard medical work should be exactly discerned in a patient, thus providing a correct diagnosis of his malady, the above characteristics of *tamas* given in the Gītā are found in the mental state of Arjuna under consideration. On the contrary those of *rajas* and *kāma* do not appear there. Is there even a trace of any craving and attachment for enjoyments—characteristic of the latter—in that state of his ? His intention to desert the field was not based on an insistence on the pursuit of actions.² The untenability of the contention that he was bent upon begging alms has already been shown above. The

1. A detailed discussion of these will be found in the sixth chapter.

2. Of course this does not mean that he had gone to the length of the abandonment of all actions. His mental state was of a subtle nature, midway between these two extremes. It is discussed in the chapters to follow.

fact is that though he was talking about the desertion of the act of the war necessary at that time, it was not because he was tempted by any other particular act. Thus one fails to find in that mental frame of his any predominance of *rajas*—of (egoistic) tendency towards action, of a craving for the sense-pleasures. The abovesaid symptoms of *tamas*, however, are clearly discernible in him. His knowledge had been shrouded; and as he himself says in the most piteous tone, he had lost the power of discriminating between the good and bad. *Moha* was holding his mind firmly under its clutches. His body had lost mobility as if due to sloth and slumber. The body of one who is caught in the whirlpool of *kāma* and craving would run with speed towards its object; on the contrary, that of one swayed by pure *moha*, unmixed with *kāma*, remains but still and inactive.

The different characteristics of *rajas* and *tamas* have been further explained in the above canto in the following words:

<i>lobhaḥ pravṛtīrārambhah</i> <i>rajasyetāni jāyante</i> <i>karmaṇāmasamaḥ sṛṣṭā</i> <i>vivṛddhe bhārataṣabha.</i>	XIV/12,
<i>apṛakāśo'pravṛttiśca</i> <i>pramādo moha eva ca</i> <i>tamayetāni jāyante</i> <i>vivṛddhe kuruvandana.</i>	XIV/13
<i>sattvātsañjāyate jñānam</i> <i>rajaso lobha eva ca</i> <i>pramādamohan tamaso</i> <i>bhavato'jñānameva ca.</i>	XIV/17.

“When *rajas* predominates, Arjuna, greed, (egoistic) tendency and initiative for action, an insatiable hankering after acts, craving—these (symptoms) are produced—12. And, Arjuna, when *tamas* predominates, lack of light (a state of being confused and perplexed), inertia, *pramāda*, *moha*—these are produced—13. From *sattva* results knowledge, and from *rajas* but greed; from *tamas* result *pramāda*, *moha*, and also ignorance.17.” Out of these characteristics ‘lack of light’ but not greed was

present in Arjuna at that time. Finally, while describing the effects of the preponderance of each of the three qualities, the Gīta says :

<i>ūrdhvaṁ gacchanti sattoasthā</i> <i>madhye tiṣṭhanti rājasāḥ</i> <i>jaghanyagūṇarttiṣṭhā</i> <i>adho gacchanti tāmasāḥ.</i>	XIV/18
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“Those of the *sattva* temperament ascend upwards; those of *rajas* remain at the intermediate state; while those low beings who are enveloped in *tamas* sink downwards.”¹ The reader will now realise as to why the Lord, before even starting any serious discussion, rebuked Arjuna with such harsh expressions as ‘unmanliness’, ‘stain’, ‘un-Aryan’, ‘anti-heavenly’. He did so because he discerned in him, not any leaning towards the *sāṅkhya* school of knowledge and the abandonment of all action, but an upsurge of *moha*, of the nature of ignorance, resulting from *tamas*. Even if the Lord is supposed to be looking upon the *sāṅkhya* path as an inferior one when compared with the path of action, he would not have used so harsh a language with reference to it.

What do Arjuna's grief and dejection also point to ?

The above symptoms of the *tamas*-born *moha* are thus seen to agree with the account of Arjuna's mental condition.² But here is a further special symptom. One prominent feature of that state is his intense grief and dejection. *Sañjāya* has used in verse 1/28 the clear adjective *viśīdan* (‘dejected’) with reference to Arjuna; and again a similar one in verse 11/1 and 11/10 also. Besides, in verse 1/47 he has used in the same connection the expression ‘grief-stricken.’ Arjuna himself also has given in verse 11/8 a moving description of his heart-rending grief. In addition to all this, the remark ‘you are grieving over those that deserve no grief’, addressed by

1. A majority of the writers take the ‘upward’ state to mean the abodes of gods etc., the ‘intermediate’ state the world of human beings, and the ‘downward’ state the life of subhuman existence (or, hell).

2. Besides the above verses, the relation between *tamas* and *moha* is also stated in verses XV/11/7, 25.

Kṛpā to Arjuna at the very commencement of his philosophical discourse (II/11) also shows that even to him the grief of Arjuna appeared as the prominent feature of that mental state of his. There is also a further mention of Arjuna's grief and dejection in verses II/25, 26, 27, 28, 30; and lastly XVIII/66.

Are even the grief and dejection of Arjuna related to the disposition of *kāma* as such? In the above discussion of the *tamas* quality, based on the fourteenth canto, there was no mention of this symptom. But in the conclusion of the discourse in the eighteenth canto, returning again to the characteristics of the three qualities, the *Gītā* has connected grief and dejection with *tamas*. At that place it observes:

*ayuktaḥ prākṛtaḥ stabdhaḥ
saṭho naiṣkṛtiko'lasaḥ
viśādi dīrghasūtrī ca
kāṛtā tāmasa ucyate.* XVIII/28

*jayā svapnaṁ bhayaṁ śokaṁ
viśādan madameva ca
na vimūḍhā durmedhā
dhṛtīḥ sā pārtha tāmasī.* XVIII/35

“He is a *tāmasa* doer who is of unsteady mind, uncultured, stubborn, a knave, cheat, indolent, given to dejection, and is dilatory—28. That steadfastness (of the will) due to which an evil-minded person does not abandon sleep, fear, grief, dejection, conceit, Arjuna, is of the nature of *tamas*—35.”¹

What is ‘*kāma*’?

We shall now proceed to a detailed consideration of the

5. The following verse may also be considered here :

“He is a *rājasa* doer of acts who is attached to enjoyments, desirous of the ‘fruit’ of action, greedy, violent, of impure temperament and moved by joy and grief.” (XVIII/27). This too mentions grief. But the joy and grief of *rajas* are different from the grief and dejection of *tamas*. The former grief is more of the nature of sorrow and is mingled with joys, like shade and light. The *rajas* type of pains and pleasures go on following each other—pleasure at the fulfilment of desire, a momentary sorrow for any obstruction in it and pleasure again at its removal. The *tamas* type of grief is of a different make. It is far more lasting and deeply permeates the heart than the *rājasa* sorrow. Arjuna's great dejection was obviously of that type.

precise meaning and scope of *kāma* and *moha*. Let us first turn to *kāma*. It is usually taken to be equivalent to desire; but that is not quite correct. It is necessary to consider precisely which desires are included in it and which are not. To begin with in a general way, it includes two types of desires—one for obtaining pleasure and the other for avoiding pain. It is often thought that *kāma* is exclusively confined to the desire for pleasure. But the *Gītā* uses that word in a broader sense so as to include therein both a desire or longing for pleasure as also an aversion or sorrow for pain. When a man starts brooding over the objects of sense, he develops a liking for their attainment and a dislike for everything likely to act as an obstruction therein. It is the teaching of the *Gītā* that the seeker after liberation should rise above both these likes and dislikes, should be unaffected by such pleasures as well as pains, while performing his duty. The source of such *kāma*-natured likes and dislikes lies in the notion of the self as the enjoyer. They are egoistic in character. Such likes for pleasure and dislikes for pain arise from the notion that oneself, i.e. one's limited individual ego, is the experiencer of the physical and mental pleasures and pains in the worldly life.

Non-attachment and the abandonment of 'fruit'.

It is often overlooked that the disposition of *kāma* includes not only the desire for the attainment of pleasure, but also for the avoidance of pain; and undue stress is therefore laid upon only one part of the concept of *niṣkāma* action. As a matter of fact the *niṣkāma* attitude itself is only one aspect of the ideal action and not its complete nature. It is a wrong notion that an act performed with that attitude is necessarily an ideal one. That point is coming up for a fuller discussion in the sequel. But when attention is concentrated on only one form even of that attitude, the definition of the ideal act is narrowed down still further. In a *niṣkāma* disposition there is the absence both of the desire to have pleasure and the desire not to have pain. According to the *Gītā*, it is not enough for one to be simply indifferent to the resulting pleasures while doing one's duty; he must also remain unperturbed by any resultant pain. It can not be said that the *niṣkāma* attitude has been truly ingrained in one who wants

the *niskāma* attitude has been truly ingrained in one who wants neither pleasures nor pains to visit him. The truly *niskāma* person would be he who desires neither that pleasures should come to him nor that pains should *not* visit him.¹

The Gītā no doubt teaches *anāsakti*, i.e. non-attachment for the *phala* of action; but in order to grasp its real sense it is necessary to interpret properly the words *phala* and 'attachment'. For, if viewed only from the popular standpoint, while one may say that there should be no attachment for the pleasant 'fruit', there is little sense in insisting on the non-attachment even for the painful one. As for non-attachment for the latter, that is in fact quite natural to the organic life. But when the Gītā teaches non-attachment for the 'fruit' of action, it means a non-attachment or an attitude of supreme indifference towards the attainment of the pleasant 'fruit' and the non-attainment of the painful one.²

What is true of non-attachment applies also to *tyāga* i.e. 'abandonment.' It will not do to follow here the apparent meaning of the word. It would be alright to speak of performing the duty with the abandonment of its 'fruit', where such fruit is a pleasant one. But where it is a painful one, due to the fear of which a man is deserting his duty, is he to be advised to 'abandon' that fruit, or to stick to that duty with a smile on the face and an acceptance even of that painful fruit? As for the abandonment of such a fruit, he may be himself prepared for it from the very start along with the relinquishment of that act itself.³ The proper thing at such a time would be to dissuade him from that (literal) *tyāga*, and persuade him to do that duty *accepting* its painful fruit with an unruffled mind. If words like *kāma* and attachment are interpreted only with reference to the desire for pleasure, one does not gather the full import of the *niskāma* attitude as taught in the Gītā. Such a narrow interpretation of that attitude would no doubt yield the two lessons of the performance of the pleasant duty, just for the sake of duty, without regard to its pleasant consequences as its motive; and secondly of the avoidance of the pleasant but wrong acts by remaining

1. Vide Gītā, II/56.

2. *na prapīyāt priyaṃ prāpya, na dvijetprāpya cāpriyaḥ*.—V/20.

3. Vide, Gītā, XVIII/8.

unattached to their pleasant consequences. Nevertheless, we would fail to grasp from it the third important thread in the message of the Gītā, which requires the performance of the duties of a painful nature, without any aversion, disquiet or sorrow in the mind for their painful fruit.

A limited view of the teaching of the Gītā.

Here is an illustration of how a limited interpretation (i. e. one confined only to the desire for pleasure) of such phrases as *karma-phala-tyāga* (abandonment of the *phala* of action) and *anāsakti* (non-attachment) leads knowingly or unknowingly to a restricted view of the teaching of the Gītā. In the introduction to his translation of the Gītā, Mahātmā Gandhi writes : 'From the bitter experiences of desire for fruit the author of the Gītā discovered the path of renunciation of fruit, and put it before the world in a most convincing manner.... Thus, according to the Gītā, all acts that are incapable of being performed without attachment are taboo. This golden rule saves mankind from many a pitfall. According to this interpretation murder, lying, dissoluteness and the like must be regarded as sinful and therefore taboo. Man's life then becomes simple, and from that simpleness springs peace.' (Introduction, para 24).¹ While there need be no objection to the propriety of these observations so far as they go, it has to be pointed out that they fail to express the full message of the Gītā. It may be that "all acts that are incapable of being performed without attachment are taboo"²; but what about that important directive of the Gītā that one must necessarily perform even such *niyata* (duly fixed) and *kārya* (right) acts for which he feels no attachment, nay, might be feeling a positive aversion? It is true that the golden rule of the partially interpreted *niskāma* or *anāsakti* (un-attached) attitude expressed in the above quotation will save a man from many a pitfall; but it will not do to overlook that one

1. Originally written in Gujarati, this English translation of the Introduction, however, is Gandhi's own, and will be found in 'Gītā The Mother' at pp. 12-20. The whole of Gandhi's Gujarati rendering of the Gītā has been translated in English by the late Mr. Mahadeo Desai in the book 'The Gītā according to Gandhi', which also contains the above Introduction and an essay by Mr. Desai himself.

2. And that too if the attachment is for egoistic ephemeral pleasures.

has sometimes to pass even through some other pitfalls to which that rule may not apply. And, be it noted, the critical pitfall of Arjuna, as a remedy against which the Gītā has been narrated, was analogical to this other variety and not the one mentioned in the above extract. It is not an occasion where the Lord dissuades Arjuna from a wrong act to which he was turning due to attachment for its pleasant fruit. On the contrary, the result of the Gītā discourse is that while Arjuna was seeking to withdraw from a necessary duty the Lord persuaded him to perform it.¹

‘Kāma’ includes attraction (for pleasure) and aversion (for pain).

The state of *kāma* thus involves two evils; a longing for pleasure and a dislike for pain. They are aptly described in the Gītā at some places as *rāga* and *dveṣa* respectively. Due to a desire for pleasure a feeling of *rāga* i. e. egoistic attraction is produced for some objects; and one begins to like them, to hanker after them. On the other hand, due to a sorrowful attitude towards pain, a feeling of *dveṣa* i. e. dislike or aversion is produced for certain other objects. The Gītā wants the wise to remain unaffected by both. It rightly insists that just as one should have no such attachment for the pleasant aspect of an action’s fruit, so should he face with an unperturbed un sorrowful mind its painful aspect also; that is, he should have no attachment for the absence of that painful aspect either.

mātrāṣparśāstu kaunteya

śītoṣṇasukhaduḥkḥadāḥ

āgamāpṛiyo’ nityāś

tāmstīti, śaśva bhārata.

II/14

“Arjuna, the contacts with sense-objects that produce the experiences of cold or heat, pleasure or pain, have a beginning and end, and are therefore transitory. Endure them.”

yaṁ hi na vyathayantyete

puṁṣaṁ puruṣarabha

1. Cf. “In fact, the very purpose of enunciating the Gītā gospel is to explain why a wise man ought to perform a deed in spite of a knowledge of its horrible consequences; and therein, indeed, lies the very speciality of the Gītā.” Tilak, chapter, XI para 1.

samaduḥkhasukhaṁ dhīraṁ

so’nyatvāya kalpate.

II/15

“Oh best of men, that wise person, looking with equanimity upon pleasure and pain, who is not affected—disturbed in his peace of mind, swerved from the path of duty—by these (sense-contacts) becomes fit to attain immortality (Liberation).”

sukhaduḥkhe same kṛtvā

lābhālābhau jayājyau

tato yuddhāya yujyasva

naivam pāpamavāpsyasi.

II/38

“Treating equally pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat, enter upon this war; by thus waging this war you will incur no sin.”

duḥkheṣvanudvignamanāḥ

sukheṣu vigatasprhaḥ

vītarāgabhyavakrodhaḥ

sthitadhīrmunirucyate.

II/56

vaḥ sarvaīrānabhisnehas-

tattatprāpya śubhāśubham

nābhinandati na dveṣṭi

tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā.

II/57

“He whose mind is not ruffled by sorrow nor has a longing for pleasure, who is free from attachment, fear and anger, is the sage of stabilised reason—56. His reason should be regarded as stabilised who has no affection for anything, who feels neither elation nor aversion, whatever happy or unhappy event comes to pass—57.” The mind naturally feels attraction towards pleasant objects and aversion towards the unpleasant. The Gītā advises a conquest not only of one but both of them. No non-duty ought to be performed under the influence of an attachment for pleasure; and no duty ought to be abandoned under the influence of aversion and fear. That a patient ought not to insist on unhealthy sweets is

of course right; but that alone will not do. He must also be prepared to take the bitter yet health-restoring medicines. Without the latter he can not be credited with full wisdom.

Thus in the view of the Gītā the term *kāma* includes both the desire for having pleasure and the desire for *not* having pain. Some things are disliked and yet in the view of the Gītā they ought not to be abandoned. The egoistic aversion about such objects is also a form of *kāma*.

Matters outside 'kāma': concern for pleasures and pains of others.

It has thus been seen that the desire to have pleasure and to avoid pain fall within the scope of *kāma*. Let us now see what desires are not included in it. It is as wrong to say that it includes only the desires for pleasure, as that it includes all such desires. It is important to note that there are some desires for pleasure, and some aversions for pain, that do not fall under the disposition of *kāma*. That disposition, as said before, is related to the sentiment of egoism; and those desires for pleasure, that are not born out of that sentiment, can not be included under it. While the desire for one's personal pleasure will come under *kāma*, that for the pleasure of some one else will not. Otherwise, he who prays for 'the health and happiness of all creation' will have to be classed as a *kāma*-ridden fellow. If without any motive concerning my personal pleasure and pain, I show pity to some one else, desire pleasure for him, it will be a case of *niṣkāma* wish. Even if such an act of piety is not befitting the recipient, place and time (vide verse XV/II/20), it will be *akārya* (improper or wrong) but still not *sakāma*. We have already said above that not all *niṣkāma* acts are truly good; and the point is also coming up for a fuller discussion in the sequel. But for the present it is necessary to ascertain the exact connotation of the terms *sakāma* and *niṣkāma*. A *sakāma* charity is not the same thing as an improper one. A charity, at the proper time and to the proper person, but given for the sake of one's own fame would be a right yet *sakāma* charity. But a charity given without the idea of any personal pleasure would be *niṣkāma*, no matter whether it is right or otherwise. An act directed towards the enhancement of the pleasure of others or for the removal of their pain,

provided it is a proper act, would be of the nature of *sattva*; and if improper, of the nature of (*sattva*-mixed) *tamas*. But it will not fall under the category of *rajas*. If one were to give food, against medical advice, to a patient crying for it, just with the idea of removing that passing pain of his, it will be a case of *niṣkāma* but *tamas*-natured *moha*. On the other hand, the conduct of one who will remain attending to the patient properly will fall (provided his motive is purely the recovery of the patient and not his personal pleasure or pain) under the category of *niṣkāma sattva* quality.

It is true that from the standpoint of complete perfection the Gītā advocates an indifference to all pleasures and pains—whether one's own or of others. Even in respect of others, it would be better to prefer their good to their pleasure in case of a conflict between the two. It is worth noting that in the description of the ideal person the Gītā speaks of his pursuit of the good (*hitam*) of the entire creation (XII/14),¹ and not of its 'pleasure' (*sukham*), as some western writers would like to say.² Even then, however, ethically speaking there is a great difference between the mind being ruffled by one's own pleasures and pains and by those of others. The former is the category of *kāma*; the latter falls outside it. Not *kāma* but pity should be attributed to a man who is moved by the patient's pain in an operation meant for the restoration of his health. And if such pity leads the person to insist on a discontinuance of the operation, it will be a case of *niṣkāma* *moha* on his part, and not of a *moha* born of *kāma*. Under these circumstances he will have to be told that though the patient's body is passing through suffering in the operation, in it lies the patient's own good; and that it is a confusion—*moha*—to mistake the patient's present bodily pleasure for his true good. The attachment for one's own pleasure and pain is thus different from that for those of others.

One's own pleasure should be regarded as desirable only when clearly conducive to one's good;³ otherwise it is better to regard it as unworthy of pursuit. The pleasure of others

1. *sarvabhūtahite rataḥ*.

2. This is further discussed in the tenth chapter.

3. Cf.: "I am that *kāma* in the beings that does not conflict with righteousness" (VII/11.)

should be regarded as unworthy only when it clearly conflicts with their good; otherwise it is better to regard it as desirable¹. It may be proper for the ruler to entertain no concern for his own pleasure and no aversion for his own pain; but it is of course his duty to be wide awake to the happiness and misery of his subjects. Even the Lord himself, when grieved by the suffering of the good, incarnates on this earth for setting things right (vide IV/7, 8). The great poet Vyāsa who through all his mythological works and the great epic of Mahābhārata is said to have imparted but one central lesson—"The service of others is the way to secure merit, and causing pain to others the path of sin,"² could not possibly have included the concern for the pleasures and pains of others in *kāma*. Such a concern may at times conflict with the true good and therefore be of the nature of *moḥa* born of ignorance; but *kāma* is a different matter.

Longing for 'mokṣa'.

Another desire not included in *kāma* is that for the happiness—bliss—of Liberation. Though a desire for the pleasures of alleged *svarga* (heaven) is included in it, the desire for Liberation is of a different character. Those who hanker after the heavenly pleasures are clearly described in the Gītā as 'full of *kāma*' (II/43),³ 'engrossed in the ideas of enjoyment and material prosperity' (II/44), and 'devotees of *kāma*'⁴ (XI/21). The pleasures of heaven though more intense and lasting as compared to those of this world, are after all temporary and liable to terminate (vide IX/21). The Lord has asked Arjuna to disregard those pleasures as also the scriptural texts that deal with them (II/45, 46). But it deserves to be specially noted that though the heavenly pleasures are thus included under *kāma*, the immortal bliss of Liberation is not. Howsoever much the Gītā may advise the renunciation of—unconcern for—the *phala* of action, it is clear

1. The current idea that the Gītā is entirely opposed to the consideration of the consequences of action is discussed in details in Chapter XII. *paraphāṇam*.

2. *aśāntaśca bhṛtānām vyāsasya vacanadūyam, paropakāraḥ puṇyāya pāṭhyā*

3. *Kāmāmānaḥ svargaparāḥ*.

4. *Trayādharmamaprapannāḥ kāmakānāḥ*.

that in no way does that refer to the *phala* (vide verse V/4) in the form of the achievement of Liberation. There is not the least intention on the part of its author to advise any unconcern for it. It will indeed be a gross misrepresentation of the direction 'to regard success and failure with an equal eye' occurring in verse II/48, to relate it to the success or failure in the pursuit of Liberation. Describing the importance of its achievement, the Gita says :

manuṣyāṇāṃ sahasreṣu
kaścidvyatati siddhaye
yatatāmapi siddhānām
kaścinnmān vetti tattvataḥ. VII/3

"Out of thousands, hardly a solitary man seeks perfection; (and) even out of those (rare persons) who make such effort barely any one knows 'me' truly (i.e. attains that perfection)". That a man should always be eager to attain the final goal of human life described variously as 'the state of Liberation', 'the state of absolute divinity' (*brāhmī sthiti* II/72), the realisation of the identity of all souls, is the very basis of the gospel of the Gītā. Such a desire not only does not bring the evil of *kāma*, but on the other hand lessens whatever of it may already be in oneself. The state of Liberation has been described at several places in the Gītā as the state of eternal supreme bliss. See, for example, the following verse:

bāhyaśparśeṣasoktātmā
vindatyātmāni yatsukham
sa brahmayogyuktātmā
sukhamakṣayamaśnute. V/21

"He who is not attached to the contacts with external objects—to the pleasures born of them—realises the bliss within his own self; having achieved union with the *brahman* he experiences eternal bliss." In this verse the transient worldly pleasures have been distinguished from the perennial bliss of Liberation; and while the former are condemned the signal importance of the latter has been excellently brought out. See also :

*sukhamātyantikaṁ yattad-
buddhigrāhyamatindriyaṁ
veti yatra na caivāyaṁ
sthitaścalati tattvataḥ.*

VI/21.

“That state in which he realises the supreme bliss beyond the reach of the senses and capable of being grasped only by the subtle intellect (*buddhi*); wherein once established he never swerves from the final reality.” There is an impression that the Gītā condemns all desires and longings. But the fact is that it disapproves only the *kāma*-natured and *moha*-born desires, from which the desire for Liberation is excluded. The same Kṛṣṇa who while describing the best devotee says :

*yo na hr̥syati na dweṣṭi
na śocati na kāṅkṣati
śubhāśubhapharītṛyāgī
bhaktimānyaḥ sa me priyaḥ.*

XII/17

“That devout person who feels neither joy nor hate, who neither grieves nor ‘desires’, and has renounced both the happy as well as the unhappy, is dear to me”, also praises in the following verse those who ‘desire’ or long for Liberation :

*tadityanabhisandhāya
phalaṁ yojñatapaḥkriyāḥ
dānakriyāśca vividhāḥ
kriyante mokṣakāṅkṣibhiḥ.*

XVII/25

“Uttering the expression *om tat*, with no wish for the fruit, those who DESIRE Liberation perform various kinds of sacrifices, penances and charities.” Similarly there is a reference to the *mokṣaparāyaṇa muniḥ* (the monk intently seeking Liberation) in verse V/28. In short, the desire for Liberation is not included in the *kāma*-natured forbidden desires. Some readers are likely to feel this statement quite obvious and therefore redundant; but it is hoped that its importance will be realised in our further discussion of the central teaching of the Gītā. For the present suffice it to say that according to the directions of the Gītā not all the desires or longings are forbidden ones,

and that some of them like the one for Liberation are good.

Aversion for hell.

Lastly, let us refer to one more desire not included in *kāma*. Though an aversion for pain (in general) falls under it, the aversion for hell does not. Just as the desire for the bliss of Liberation is not forbidden, so too the aversion for the suffering of hell is not disapproved. While fear may be bad, not so the fear of sin; so also though according to the Gītā one should entertain no worry about his own pains, it does not mean that there should be no worry about the suffering of hell. There is nothing wrong in any one abandoning an act due to the fear of hell; provided, of course, the fear is a well founded one. When the Gītā wants pleasures and pains to be treated on equal footing, it does not imply that the bliss of Liberation should be regarded on the same footing as the misery of hell, and that one should be absolutely unconcerned whichever of these is secured or lost. On the contrary, voicing his clear condemnation of the state of hell Kṛṣṇa says :

*anekacittavibhṛāntā
mohajālasamāvṛtāḥ
prasaktāḥ kāmabhogeṣu
patanī narakē'sucau.*

XVI/16

*trividham narakasyedaṁ
dvāraṁ nāśanamātmanaḥ
kāmaḥ krodhastatā lobhas-
tasmādetatrayaṁ tyajet.*

XVI/21

“Those who are entangled in the network of *moha*, with the mind bewildered in diverse manners and addicted to *kāma* and enjoyments fall in unholy hell—16. *Kāma*, anger and greed, these three constitute the self-ruinous gateway of hell; therefore these three ought to be abandoned-21.” Just as the bliss of Liberation is different from the secular pleasures, the state of hell is different from secular pains. The word hell ordinarily brings to one's mind the idea of horrible physical suffering. But a work like the Gītā would not condemn hell simply on that account. For it is the

very principle of the Gītā that in the matter of the rightness or wrongness of action no significance should be attached to one's own physical pain. The main idea in the notion of hell seems to be the extreme moral and spiritual downfall. Liberation is the attainment of God and hell the total turning away from Him. This nature of hell has been described by Kṛṣṇa in the following line.

*māmaprāpyaiṣa kaunteya
tato yāntyadhamānī gatiṁ.*

XVI/20 (latter half)

"Arjuna, (these stupid people) not reaching Me, ultimately sink to the lowest state". It is often thought that the opposite of heaven is hell. But it is not quite correct. The pairs of opposites are rather heaven (*svarga*) versus this world, and Liberation *mokṣa* versus hell. The performance of ordinary good deeds will not take a man to *mokṣa*; at best he will go to the 'heaven', and when his stock of merit is exhausted in course of time he will descend back to the earthly life.¹ So also a man does not go to hell by ordinary misdeeds; he suffers the consequences in the worldly life itself. But a whole-hearted devotion to God would lead a being to *mokṣa*, and an utterly vicious life to hell.

It is hoped that the concept of *kāma* has been sufficiently clarified in the above discussion. It connotes the egoistic desire for the earthly (and heavenly) pleasures, and the dislike for such pains. Its origin lies in the personal sentiment of the 'me' and 'mine' based on the notion of one's ego as an enjoyer. The longing for liberation and aversion for hell are not included within its scope. Similarly a desire for the pleasures of others and the dislike for their pains are also excluded from it. In a nutshell, *kāma* means narrow egoistic attachment.

What is 'moha'?

Having ascertained the meaning of *kāma* let us now turn to the second important term. *Moha* means intellectual

1. Vide Gita, IX 20, 21.

ignorance, confusion, bewilderment or perverted view. Due to it a man deserts his duty, his reason loses the proper perspective, it stops functioning or does so in the wrong direction. *Kāma* and *moha* are often confused with each other in the ordinary parlance. If a man performs his duty though with an egoistic attachment for its fruit, he should be regarded as subject to the former alone without suffering from *moha*. On the contrary, if he performs a wrong act but without any egoistic motive, he suffers from the latter without the former. And if a man performs a wrong act and that too with an attitude of egoistic attachment, he should be said to have been overcome by both of them. An illustration may help clarify this point. Suppose a criminal case is being tried by a bench of four judges; and that an impartial proper consideration of the nature of the offence, the attendant circumstances, and the provisions of law, calls for a sentence of imprisonment for two years to meet the ends of justice. Suppose also that two out of the four judges have some previous unpleasant association with the accused, and feel a sort of secret pleasure at getting that opportunity to sentence him. As a matter of fact no true judge ought to feel any personal pleasure or sorrow in convicting or acquitting an accused according to law. But under the influence of such a feeling of personal vengeance the first of the four judges expresses himself in favour of a sentence of three years. The second also has a similar egoistic feeling, but not letting it influence his faculty of judgment he proposes a sentence of two years only. There being no question of any such pleasure in the minds of the other two judges they are quite unprejudiced in that respect. But being unable to arrive at a proper decision as to whether the case demands only a light punishment in view of the poverty and family circumstances of the accused, or a deterrent one in view of the possible evil effects of his act on the society at large, the third proposes a sentence of one year. The fourth judge after a balanced unbiassed consideration of all the concerned factors decides to pass a sentence of two years. Now in the light of the above clarification of the natures of *kāma* and *moha*, the first of these four judges may be said to be subject to both of these, the second to the

former alone, the third to the latter alone, and the last to neither of them.

'*Moha*' not invariably a product of '*kāma*'.

It has been shown above that Arjuna's mood on the eve of the Gītā discourse falls, according to the description in the discourse itself, under the category of *moha* and not *kāma*. However against our contention that the Gītā itself has drawn a distinction between the two states, a reader may point to the following famous verses in the second canto :

dhyāyato viṣayānṇpūṁsah
sangastēś'upajāyate
saṁgātsanjāyate kāmaḥ
kāmakrodho' bhījāyate.

krodhādbhavati sammohaḥ
sammohātsmṛtibhramah
smṛtibhramśādbuddhināśo
buddhināśātpṛaṇṣyati.

"He who broods over sense-objects develops an association with them; the association breeds *kāma* which in its wake produces anger—62. From anger results *saṁ-moha*, and from the latter a loss of memory (forgetfulness about duty); such loss of memory brings about loss of reason, and that culminates in the utter ruin of the man—63." It is possible to argue that though the Gītā speaks of *moha* in Arjuna's mind, since the origin of *moha* is traced in the above verses to *kāma*, it follows that Arjuna's real malady was nothing else than the latter; and that therefore an attempt to find the central idea of the Gītā in the lesson of the *niṣkāma* attitude would be quite fitting to the opening state of Arjuna's mind.

This objection is of considerable importance in our present discussion; and its critical consideration is essential for the further understanding of the nature of *moha* as also the correct ascertainment of the Gītā's central lesson. Though egoistic attachment is said in the above verses to result in *moha*, the Gītā mentions it only as one common mode of the appearance of the latter. While *moha* is possible from egoistic

attachment, that is not its only source. It is possible even without such attachment; and as the reader will presently see, Arjuna's *moha* was just of that different variety. Egoistic attachment partakes of the nature of *rajas*, while *moha* of *tamas*. When *rajas* predominates very greatly and gets mixed up with other exciting circumstances, its degeneration into *tamas* is but natural; and it is from this point of view that the origin of *moha* is traced in the above verses to egoistic attachment. In that sense, later in the third canto also, declaring egoistic attachment as the great enemy that drags a man towards the path of sin, the Lord says :

ārytam jñānametena
jñānino nityavairiṇā
kāmarūpeṇa kaunteya
duṣpūrenānalena ca. III/39

indriyāni mano buddhir-
asyādhiṣṭhānamucyate
etaivimohapatyēṣa
jñānamāvṛtya dehinam. III/40

"By this *kāma*, an insatiable fire as it were, the permanent foe of the wise, knowledge has been enveloped—39. It takes its seat in the senses, mind and reason; veiling knowledge by means of these it produces *moha* in the mind of man—40". But it does not follow from this that the path of *rajas* and *kāma* is the exclusive one for the manifestation of *tamas* and *moha*. A direct upsurge of *tamas* without the prior predominance of *rajas* in the mind need not be regarded as impossible. It is obvious that just as the *rajas* temperament can degenerate into the *tamas* one, the latter can in a reverse process be uplifted into the former (and from that into the *sāttvika* one). But then if one can be uplifted from the *tamas* state into the *rajas* one, what is the point in insist-

1. Śaṅkara's explanation of *jñāninaḥ nityavairiṇaḥ* is very apt. The wise man realises the evil nature of *kāma* from the very start; but the unwise first hankers after it, and when (due to its absolute insatiability) it begins to result in pain he regards it as a foe. Thus the opposition by the unwise, not being from the start, is not for all time; the wise, however, regard it for all time as an enemy.

ing in a circular manner that he must have fallen into that *tamas* state from the *rajas* state itself? He may or may not have so fallen. Though it is true that the water on the earth goes up and again descends back upon it, it would hardly be proper to maintain that all the water on the earth must originally have descended from above.

However, keeping aside this somewhat academic point, even if we proceed to examine the actual description of Arjuna's *moha* as given in the Gītā, we do not come across the serial order mentioned in the above verses. According to that order egoistic attachment results in anger, and anger in *moha*. But was there any anger in the mind of Arjuna at that time? And where indeed was egoistic attachment present in it? In the account of his mental state contained in the thirtyone verses quoted previously not a word is found indicative of anger. Though there is a repeated mention of his grief and dejection in the Gītā, there is none whatever of any *kāma* and anger in him at that time. Therefore even if we look to the then physical and mental plight of Arjuna we do not find therein the order '*kāma*-anger-*moha*'. He who instead of inflicting a well-deserved punishment on greedy, criminal, violent, wicked persons in an open theatre of war, talks of preferring even death at their hands (vide verses I/35, 46), surely manifests not anger but quite the reverse of it.¹ And as for egoistic attachment too, one who insists on refusing to commit that 'heinous sin' of family war even for the sake of a mastery over the three worlds, not to speak of a sovereignty over the mere earth, gives

1. And yet writers who insist that Arjuna's *moha* was born of *kāma* somehow try to trace anger also in him by twisting words. Thus Ācārya Vinoba Bhavé admits that though overpowered by dejection, "there was no anger in Arjuna in the usual sense. He was not angry or irritated". But he insists that the dejection (*viśāda*) itself should here be taken to mean anger (*krodha*), because both involve the common factor of mental excitement. (vide *Śhītāprajñādarśana*, pp. 79-87, and 96-98). This curious stretching of words is necessitated because the writer visualises only one kind of *moha*—viz., that born of *kāma* through anger; and wants to force Arjuna's *moha* into that pattern. Another idea of Mr. Bhavé, equally open to objection, is that *kāma* inevitably leads to anger and *moha*. He overlooks that *kāma* has a righteous aspect too (vide Gītā VII/11).

proof at least in that mental state not indeed of the presence but of the absence of it!

A clarification.

It will be well to clarify here one point before proceeding further. We have just now said that no egoistic attachment is found in the mental state of Arjuna at that moment. And it has also been said previously that there was no dawn of true renunciation in him. Apparently, these two statements may appear conflicting. But the idea in the previous contention is that the passion of *kāma*, the egoistic desire for the enjoyment of pleasures, had not been completely uprooted from his mind at that moment, it being there in a latent form; and his opposition to that war was not based on a stand of complete renunciation of enjoyments. The implication of the present statement is that the opposition was not based on the standpoint of an egoistic attachment for the enjoyments either. For, though such attachment was present in a latent form in his mind, it was not actually operative at the time of that particular *moha*. It would be incorrect to say that his *moha* was the outcome of such attachment. In short, the mental bewilderment of Arjuna concerning that war was related neither to the total absence nor to a direct operation of the egoistic attachment, it being an independent event. A simple illustration would clarify this point further. If a patient of chronic gas trouble is attacked by cholera, that accidental disease is connected neither with the presence nor even with the absence of that trouble. It would be wrong to say that the attack of cholera had its origin in total absence of the gas trouble; since that trouble was, even though not actually operative, in existence in his body even at that time. But equally untenable would be the contrary contention that the cholera originated in that trouble itself. The cause of that sudden attack is quite an independent one. Both the statements that the cholera was the outcome of the

1. Had Arjuna's *moha* really arisen out of *kāma*, there would have occurred a mention of *kāma* and anger in Kṛṣṇa's question and Arjuna's reply in verses XVIII/72 and 73 at the end of the Gītā discourse. The Lord would not have merely asked whether Arjuna's *moha* was removed, but going to the very root cause would have enquired whether his *kāma* and anger had been eradicated.

gas trouble and that it was the result of a complete absence of it would be untrue. Similarly, the statements that the utter bewilderment of Arjuna on that field of battle (leading to his desertion of duty) had resulted from the complete absence of egoistic attachment—i.e. from an attitude of total renunciation, and that it was the direct result of such attachment, are both incorrect; and no inconsistency is involved in declaring them to be so.

Therefore, while it would be illogical to affirm simultaneously both the above statements concerning Arjuna's bewilderment, there is no fallacy in denying them both. We pointed out the inconsistency of those writers that attribute to Arjuna in the same breath the disposition of *kāma* and an attitude of *sanyāsa*. But there is no inconsistency in maintaining that his intellectual bewilderment about the duty of that war was founded on neither of these standpoints, but had a different nature of its own to be clarified in details in the next chapter. When besides the two given alternatives some others are also possible, a simultaneous denial of the two can be logical, though not a simultaneous affirmation of theirs. Of course, where there are no such other possibilities, neither a simultaneous affirmation nor even a simultaneous denial of the two given alternatives would be correct.¹

1. Where only two alternatives are possible it is a case of contradictory opposition, and when more are possible a case of contrary opposition.

CHAPTER IV

ARJUNA'S 'NIŚKĀMA MOHA'

A retrospect.

According to those who trace the central idea of the Gītā in the elimination of *kāma*, it becomes necessary to first assume its presence at the root of Arjuna's psychological crisis. For, otherwise an attempt on the part of the Lord to specially impress on Arjuna's mind the lesson of its elimination just at the approach of the zero hour on the very battlefield does not appear quite relevant. But it has been seen in the last chapter that we find no such disposition in that mental state of Arjuna; not only this, but in the utterances of Arjuna himself, Kṛṣṇa and Sañjaya we find little suggestion of its presence in that mental state of his, which on the contrary has been described as a state of *moha* involving grief, dejection and bewilderment concerning the proper duty. The Gītā has stated the respective characteristics of *kāma* and *moha*, and has described the former as excelling in the quality of *rājas* while the latter in that of *tamas*. The account of *tamas* tallies with the state of Arjuna, but not that of *rājas*. Nor can it be urged that the *moha* of his had originated in the passion of *kāma* through anger as described in verses II/62, 63; for no trace either of that passion or of anger is found in Arjuna at the time of the birth of the Gītā. One is therefore led to say that Arjuna's *moha* far from being a product of that egoistic passion, was of a different nature. But as it was thought advisable to ascertain the precise natures of these two important mental states before discussing the kinds of *moha*, and its special character in the case of Arjuna, that was done in the last chapter. That discussion will, it is hoped, enable the reader to perceive clearly the fallacy in charging Arjuna with *kāma*, and to analyse properly his then mental state. Let us now proceed to the discussion of the kinds of *moha*.

'*Moha*' Without '*kāma*', and vice versa.

Moha makes a man desert his duty; whereas *kāma* i.e.

egoistic attachment, as such, produces not such a dereliction of the duty but a wrong perspective about its performance. If the doer's mind is subject to the latter alone without the former, he will do his duty but with an egoistic attachment for its pleasant consequences or sorrow for the painful ones. Not that egoistic attachment does not affect the form of the act in the least. But if it does not reach the extent of *moha*, the effect on the act remains a subtle one leaving unaffected its principal content specially for all external appearances. However, the path of egoistic attachment being a descending one, there is always the danger of that subtle difference magnifying itself into greater proportions and modifying even the detailed content of the act. In that case egoistic attachment results into *moha*. When such attachment predominates and produces in its wake anger and *moha*, it not only affects the doer's viewpoint and attitude, but is also accompanied by the desertion of duty and performance of wrong acts. Such is the interrelation between the two. But it will not do to overlook the fact that each of these is possible even without the other. *Kāma* is chiefly concerned with how i.e. with what subjective attitude, the doer performs the act; *moha* with what act he performs (or fails to perform). The former indicates the significance attached by the doer to his personal pleasures and pains. *Moha*, whether a product of egoistic attachment or otherwise, is a weakness of the deliberative reason. It paralyses or dulls the reason and produces a confusion or at least a dislike for truth and duty.

Kinds of 'moha'.

It will be clear from the above discussion that broadly speaking there are two chief varieties of *moha*: the one resulting from egoistic attachment and the other independently of it. From another angle it may also be classified in the following manner: that of the nature of a mere desertion or non-performance of duty, i.e. an attitude wherein one is unwilling to perform his appointed task but does not further insist on the performance of any wrong act instead; and secondly, that involving a positive acceptance of a non-duty. These varieties may thus be expressed :—

(A) The abandonment of the right act:

(1) Due to ignorance of reason (intellectual confusion).

(2) Due to egoistic attachment (resulting from drowsiness, indolence etc.).

(B) The acceptance of a wrong act:

(3) Due to ignorance of reason (intellectual confusion).

(4) Due to egoistic attachment.

Let us now proceed to a serial explanation of these varieties.

The 'moha' of Arjuna.

The *moha* involving an abandonment of the right act resulting from intellectual confusion:—In this variety the person has no egoistic attachment for enjoyments. But he is assailed by doubt due to intellectual bewilderment as to which act is right and which wrong; and being unable to arrive at a definite conclusion he withholds the performance of the right act. However, he has no special desire to turn actually to a wrong act. This is the type of non-egoistic *moha*. When at the commencement of the third canto Arjuna complains to Kṛṣṇa—

vyāmiśṛṇeva vākyena

buddhiṁ mohayaśiva me

tadekāṁ vada miścitya

yena śreyo'hamāpnuyām. III/2

“Thou art as it were producing *moha* in my reason by thine equivocal observations; tell me definitely, therefore, some one thing by which I may attain the true good”, it is clear that he is referring to this variety of it.¹ It is out of such *moha* that sometimes even a person non-egoistic in mind, being bewildered due to intellectual confusion, starts exclaiming that he knows not what to do and finds no light. The

1. This verse deserves particular attention of those who hold all *moha* to be the outcome of *kāma* i.e. egoistic attachment. When Arjuna protests (and that too after receiving the direction about the non-egoistic attitude), that Kṛṣṇa was as it were producing *moha* in his reason, does he mean that Kṛṣṇa was leading his mind towards egoistic attachment? See also verse IV/16.

desertion of duty resulting from such intellectual confusion could be included under the type of abandonment mentioned in the following verse of the Gītā:

*nīyatasya tu samyāsaḥ
karmaṇo nopapadyate
mohātasya paritṛyāgas
tāmasaḥ parikīrtitaḥ.*

XIII/7

“The relinquishment of the duly fixed duty (i.e. one ordained by the scriptures, or determined to be right in the existing circumstances) is not proper. Its non-performance due to *moha* is regarded as of the *tāmas* category”.

While Arjuna's attitude, as shown in the second chapter, was not one of renunciation of all action as such, there is no doubt that it falls under the present category of *moha*. He was not opposing his duty out of any egoistic attachment; his stand was not one of avoiding that war due to a desire for some other tempting act. Nor was he seeking to desert the battlefield out of physical fear. His opposition to that war was founded on an intellectual confusion. He was regarding the injuries to the mortal body, the inevitable change in the outer material dress, as the death of the soul. His further idea was that a war against one's own people was a clearly heinous act; and all the more so, as it was then being fought for the sake of his selfish enjoyment of the kingdom and the like.

As a result of all this confusion he was looking upon a right act as a wrong and sinful one. His mind was tormented by a grave problem as to what was to be done and what not. He knew that the Kauravas standing against him were wicked and criminally minded, that even the worthy Bhīṣma and Droṇa were siding with them in support of an unjust cause. But even then his mind was confounded by the thought, “Nothing but sin shall accrue to us as a result of killing these Kauravas, wicked criminals though they are” (I/36). His ‘*śruti-vipratīpannā*’ reason.

That this confusion of his had resulted not from any egoistic attachment, but from the commonplace ideas about morality which he had heard is indicated by Kṛṣṇa himself in

the following verse. After reminding Arjuna in verse II/52 that his reason was at that time overpowered by *moha*, Kṛṣṇa adds:

*śrutivipratīpannā te
yadā śhāsyati niścalā
samādhāvacalā buddhis—
tadā yogamavāpsyasi.*

II/53

“When your reason, at this moment bewildered (caught in the whirlpool of doubt) by all sort of heard ideas (*śruti*), will be firmly settled (in true knowledge), and (not only this, but going beyond the stage of mere knowledge) will be stabilised in the state of absolute equanimity (*samādhi*), you will have attained the (supreme) state of *yoga*”.

Several writers take the words *niścalā* and *acalā* in this verse as synonymous and connect them both to *samādhi*. It is however proposed here that while the latter of the two words is related to it, the former should be better taken as related to knowledge. Verses 52 and 53 supplement each other, and in one respect are of great significance for ascertaining the gist of the entire Gītā discourse. Their importance may be realised when we see that but for Arjuna's intermediate queries in the midst of the discourse, they would have been the veritable conclusion of it. Kṛṣṇa's opening discourse commencing from verse II/11 reaches its finale in these two verses; and the further portions of the Gītā may be said to mainly contain but a detailed exposition (with reference to Arjuna's occasional questions) of these fortythree verses. Lord Kṛṣṇa's immediate direction to Arjuna to wage that war (II/18), as also his permanent direction to attain the supreme equanimous *yoga* state (VI/46), both find an expression in these fortythree verses. And this exposition has been aptly concluded in verse II/53 with a comprehensive definition of the state of *yoga* regarded by the Gītā as the final ideal state. In this definition has also been expressed the special feature of the Gītā gospel stressing ‘the identity of the *sāṅkhya* and *yoga* states’ (V/5). While the non-egoistic attitude undoubtedly occupies

a necessary place in the ideal state visualised by the Gītā, true knowledge is also its another important aspect.

It was this second aspect that Arjuna was overlooking at the time; and this intellectual bewilderment had come over him due to an indiscriminate emphasis on the commonplace ideas. As a result of what he had heard regarding morality, he came to view that righteous war as sinful and opposed to the true good; and therefore fell into a confusion whether he should perform that duty or not. In verse 52, his bewilderment has been related to the ignorant statements heard by him, and he has been assured that once the covering of that bewilderment falls off from his reason nothing more would be left for him to listen and learn. This same idea has been rounded up in the first part of verse 53, where he has been told that his reason, unsettled at the time due to confusion about the right and the wrong, was whirling amidst conflicting thoughts; and that once the ignorance was removed and true knowledge realised by his reason, all intellectual undulations of it would cease and it shall be firmly established.

What was to be the content of that true knowledge? Arjuna's bewilderment was immediately concerned with the problem of his duty at the moment; he was looking to a right act as a wrong one. From this point of view the true knowledge that was to root out his bewilderment was about his duty at that time. But this would be looking at the matter from a superficial angle. Had that knowledge merely meant this much, the Gītā discourse would have had only a temporary personal significance for Arjuna, instead of the eternal universal character that it possesses. Therefore its author has skillfully carried the source of Arjuna's bewilderment concerning his immediate duty straight to the ignorance about the self and the not-self. Hence taking the removal of his metaphysical ignorance as an essential prerequisite of the uprooting of his bewilderment and confusion, Kṛṣṇa commenced his reply with an exposition of the *sāṅkhya* school of knowledge. He has also told Arjuna later on (vide verse IV/35) that a removal of the metaphysical ignorance would ensure for ever an immunity from any recurrence of such a bewilderment. Taking all this into consideration, the proposed rendering

of the word *niścalā* (in verse II/53) as 'firmly settled in true knowledge' may be expanded as follows 'firmly settled in true metaphysical knowledge, and thereby in the correct idea about your essential duty in the existing circumstances.'

But the mere intellectual grasp of this true knowledge of course does not mean the complete *yoga* state. Without the supplement of the non-egoistic (*niskāma*) and egoless (*nirahankāra*) attitude and a consequent culmination of it in the thoroughly equanimous reason—inwardly as well as outwardly—that state would not be complete. It is with that view that after expounding true knowledge, about the self and about Arjuna's duty, upto verse 38, Kṛṣṇa says in the next following verse that he is proceeding to explain the state of *yoga*. The word *samādhi* used in the Gītā includes the non-egoistic attitude concerning personal pleasures and pains, and also connotes an attitude of equanimity in other respects. This ideal state has been excellently described in the account of 'the person of stabilised reason' in the second canto, of the best devotee in the twelfth, of one who has transcended the three qualities (*saṁtva*, *rajas* and *tamas*) in the fourteenth, and elsewhere too. It is the state of supreme equanimity (*samādhi*) in which the reason is directed to be firmly established (*acalā*) in the latter half of the verse under consideration.

Thus a separate interpretation of the words *niścalā* and *acalā* occurring in the above verse helps a correct appreciation of the nature of the *yoga* state of supreme equanimity advocated in the Gītā, as also of the *moha* of Arjuna. It was of the foremost importance to remove Arjuna's intellectual confusion and to make his reason steady in his duty of that righteous war. And once it was agreed that to wage that war was the proper duty at that moment, the next step was to perform it with the subjectively non-egoistic and egoless attitude. An act accompanied by both these aspects means the ideal act befitting the equanimous state. Or, to speak in more general terms, the combination of true (objective) knowledge and pure (subjective) attitude means the state of *yoga*.

That 'śruti' did not mean pro-enjoyment Vedic texts.

Those who interpret both lines of this verse exclusively in terms of the non-egoistic attitude are obliged to see in the word *śruti* here a reference to the pro-heaven prohibition Vedic texts (mentioned in verses II/42, 43, 44)¹. In the present writer's view that is not a correct interpretation. When Kṛṣṇa describes Arjuna's reason as bewildered by *śruti*, does he mean that it was confounded by a pursuit of the heavenly pleasures, by a longing for enjoyments and material prosperity, by egoistic attachment? Was Arjuna, when opposing that war, at all hankering after the pleasures of the heaven and the like? On the contrary, he is clearly saying that he would not wage that war even for the mastery over the three worlds.

Had his reason been confounded by those pro-kāma Vedic texts mentioned in verses II/42, 43, 44, his grounds for opposing that war would have been quite different. He would have protested that he objected to that war for fear of being deprived of the heavenly enjoyments; and not (as actually urged by him) that he hated that war were it even to secure for him the sovereignty over the heavenly kingdom (vide II/8). Indeed, had his attitude at that time been really one of egoistic attachment, he would not have at all expressed an unwillingness for that war, which itself was to secure for him the pleasures of a wordly kingdom. But the fact was that his opposition to that war was not born of any such attachment to enjoyments whether in this world or the next. It is indeed a self-contradiction to urge that the anti-enjoyment *moha* of his was the outcome of the pro-enjoyment Vedic texts!

What was the 'śruti' that bewildered Arjuna?

It would therefore be improper to relate the expression "bewildered by *śruti*" in the above verse to the Vedic texts recommending egoistic pleasures. The above word *śruti* has a clear reference to the earlier word *anuśūruma* ('we have been hearing, in Arjuna's observation *narake niyatam vāso bhavati-byanuśūruma* (I/44), uttered in concluding the evils of a

1. See the comments on this verse by Tilak and others.

family war. He had heard—may be in the *śruti* in its usually accepted sense i. e. the Vedas, or in the *smṛti* i. e., the ethical codes and writings, or somewhere else!—that in view of its overall effects such an act leads one to hell. Since in the ordinary language the opposite of heaven is usually taken as hell, and *vice versa*, several writers think that Arjuna's aversion to hell was indirectly a longing for the heavenly enjoyments. But as seen in the last chapter, this idea is not correct. The Gītā while preaching non-attachment for the pleasures of heaven, expresses for hell not mere indifference but a positive contempt. According to the Gītā it is but proper that one should have aversion for hell, should regard it as something to be shunned. Kṛṣṇa found no fault with Arjuna's aversion for hell; but only disabused the latter's mind of the idea that the war would lead him there. He severed the connection between that war and hell which Arjuna's reason had formed out of a confusion caused by the heard information (*śruti*)². The main point was

1. The word *śruti*, derived from *śru* (to hear), literally means something heard. However in a special orthodox sense it has also come to denote only the Vedas (believed to have been revealed to the sages through hearing). Hence the confusion in interpreting the word here in the Gita. In the view of Mr. Mahadeo Desai (vide *The Gita According to Gandhi*, p. 161) *śruti* here may have a reference to the message sent by Dhṛtarāṣṭra (through Sanjaya) before the war to the Pāṇḍavas to dissuade them from it (See Mahābhārata, Udyoga-Parva, chapters XXII-XXVII). But even if that be so, the two can only be indirectly related. When using the expression 'bewildered by *śruti*', Kṛṣṇa's reference was to Arjuna's expression *anuśūruma*. The Gītā has not made it clear as to what precisely Arjuna himself had in mind when using that expression. But the phraseology *iti anuśūruma* ('thus have we been hearing') indicates that he had in view rather the common general knowledge gathered from the Vedas, religious books, mythological works etc. In any case *śruti* is not here meant purely for the Vedic texts. It is broadly used for 'whatever Arjuna might have heard on that topic from any source'. The expression *śrotavya śrutyaya ca* ('of whatever has been heard and has to be heard') in verse II/52 also points to the same.

2. Śaṅkara thus aptly explains the phrase *anekasādhyaśāsthanasamband-haṅbrakāśaśrūtibhiḥ śravaṇatṛiptamā nānābratīpāṇā śrutiṅbratīpāṇā vīkṣyā*. This contains no clear reference exclusively to enjoyment of kāma: and can as well indicate the following interpretation of *śrutiṅbratīpāṇā* reason: 'the reason bewildered by the statements describing (perversely) the relation of end and means between Liberation and hell on the one hand and that war and its abandonment respectively on the other.' Rāmānuja interprets the phrase quite differently, as indicating the reason 'which has been specially matured'; the word *śruti* being taken by him to refer to 'the listening to my (Kṛṣṇa's) advice'! This interpretation is quite inconsistent with the context (the latter half of verse II/52).

not the removal of this egoistic attachment for heavenly enjoyments; for, his bewilderment and desertion of duty had not originated in it. Arjuna's protest against that war was not that it would have deprived him of the worldly or heavenly enjoyments, but that 'he failed to see any true good (*śreyah*) in it' (I/31).

Thus the opening half of the above verse refers to the intellectual confusion in Arjuna's mind about that war being sinful and contrary to his true good. The first aim of Lord Kṛṣṇa was to root out that confusion and to turn Arjuna towards that war. His primary direction to Arjuna was to wage that war, may be even with an egoistic motive, but in no case to withdraw from it (II/37). Of course still better than that was to wage it with a non-egoistic and egoless attitude; and that is his further direction to Arjuna. While the first line of the above verse advocates an intellectually certain attitude about duty devoid of doubt and confusion, the expression "stabilised in the state of *samādhi*" in the latter half suggests the ideal state of absolute equanimity (including the non-egoistic and egoless attitude). Soon after in the same canto, occasioned by a question of Arjuna, this state has been further explained in details. And the fun of it is that after listening to it he too misunderstood the point, and saw in the Lord's direction an exclusive lesson of a subjective attitude of non-attachment towards personal pleasures and pains. Arjuna overlooked the fact that though that attitude is included in the preaching of Kṛṣṇa, he has at the same time also insisted on the performance of necessary duty. Therefore after listening to the account of 'the person of stabilised reason' in the second canto, Arjuna asks :

*jñāyāsi cetkarmaṇaste
matā buddhirjanārdana
tatkiṁ karmaṇi ghore mān
niyojyaśi keśava.* III/1

"If in thine view, Kṛṣṇa, the reason (established in the state of equanimity) is superior to action, why dost thou direct me to this horrible act (of war)?" He forgot that the Gītā while defining *yoga* as the state of equanimity

(II/48) also adds the remark *yogah karmasu kauśalam* (II/50) 'Whenever performing actions the wise course is to adopt the attitude of *yoga* i. e. equanimity', suggesting thereby the compatibility of the *yoga* state with the performance of necessary action. The attitude of equanimity and stabilised reason, advocated in the Gītā, does not mean absolute abandonment of all action, but directs on the contrary the performance of duty as and when warranted by the existing circumstances.

Place of the 'niṣkāma' attitude in the gītā gospel

One possible objection may be considered here. If Arjuna's *moha* did not originate in egoistic attachment, why does one find the advocacy of the non-egoistic attitude in the Gītā? It has of course been emphasized in the account of the state of stabilised reason at the conclusion of the second canto; but besides it, Arjuna has again been given the following direction for the conquest of the egoistic attachment:

*evam buddheḥ param buddhvā
saṁstabhyātmānamātmānā
jahī śatruṁ mahābāho
kāmarūpaṁ durāsadam.* III/43

"Thus realising That (Self), which transcends the reason, and practising self-restraint, destroy this formidable foe appearing as *kāma*." If Arjuna's intellectual bewilderment with the consequent desertion of duty was all from a personally non-egoistic standpoint, why, it may be asked, was such a direction given to him?

This objection may thus be met. What is being urged here is that the non-egoistic attitude was not the foremost message for the occasion and not that it has no place whatever in the Gītā's teaching. Kṛṣṇa's first direction to Arjuna was 'therefore, wage this war' (II/18), 'stand up with a determination to fight' (II/37), 'do your duly fixed act (duty)' (III/8). However, his further direction also is 'let not the fruit of action be your motive' (II/47); 'whenever performing actions do so with the attitude of *yoga*, i.e. equanimity, avoiding attachment' (II/48); 'far inferior is the (mere)

performance of action as such to *buddhiyoga* or the state of equanimous reason (which includes the occasional necessary performance of right action with the equanimous attitude); have recourse to the equanimous reason; they are (indeed) of low nature who are prompted (to action) by the motive of the fruit (*i.e.* personal consequences), (II/49); 'whenever performing actions the wise course is to adopt the attitude of *yoga i.e.*, equanimity' (II/50). Viewed in this light, the subsequent but necessary place assigned to the non-egoistic attitude in the Gītā can be easily understood. It was because Arjuna overlooked this order of precedence and started attaching to the subjective purity the prior, nay exclusive significance, that he put the above question at the beginning of the third canto, in reply to which Kṛṣṇa pointed out the error to him.

It was indeed necessary to give this further direction of the non-egoistic attitude to Arjuna in view of his then mental frame. Though that confusion of his about the duty had not been caused by egoistic attachment, the latter as said above had not been permanently uprooted from his mind. In fact, he himself concedes that he had approached the battlefield due to the attraction for royal pleasures (I/45). It was when it occurred to him that the war would deprive him of the true good that he resiled. Thus even though the passion of egoistic longing was not actually operative in his mind at that moment, when he objected to that war there was no guarantee against its future appearance. Hence, having first advised Arjuna that he ought to perform the immediate duty of that war (II/18), it was but necessary thereafter to preach the elimination of egoistic attachment for his permanent good. True, at that particular moment he was in the non-egoistic attitude professing the same indifference towards the pleasures of a mastery over the three worlds, as for the horrible physical agony of a death by inches in a non-resisting attitude. But even though his reason had assumed the non-egoistic attitude for the moment, it was necessary that it should be 'firmly established' (*āchalā*) therein. The non-egoistic attitude of his at the moment was but a temporary upsurge. It needed the basis of a philosophical exposition to make it lasting.

Opposite relation between 'kāma' and Arjuna's 'moha'.

Though Arjuna's bewilderment about duty did not originate in egoistic attachment, the two were peculiarly related. His confusion—opposition to that war—had not arisen out of or for the sake of such attachment, and yet was partly on account of it. He was not deserting that war to satisfy any egoistic desire of his. And yet, that attachment had an indirect hand in generating the hatred for that war in his mind. Though not born out of *kāma*, that hatred was the result of his nausea for it. It was not merely the idea of a war against one's own people that was weighing upon his mind; along with it was also the idea that the war was being waged by the Pāṇḍavas for the sake of their royal pleasures. And that made the entire situation absolutely intolerable to his mind. "Alas, in our greed for the pleasures of kingdom we (have sunk so low as to) have become ready to slay our own kinsmen! What a heinous sin we are bent upon committing!" (I/45). He felt a loathing at the thought of the heinous extent to which their pursuit of *kāma* had brought them, and the very moment he turned non-egoistic! He uttered desperately that not to speak of the earthly kingdom, he no more felt a desire even for the mastery over the three worlds.

But the pity of it was that though such a sudden and temporary upsurge of the non-egoistic attitude was not wrong in itself, nevertheless by a curious complication it dragged Arjuna to the abandonment of his duty itself, and he started insisting on the avoidance of that war altogether. It was this that produced indignation in Kṛṣṇa, who called it 'impotence' (II/3). No such question would have arisen had Arjuna's loathing for egoistic attachment led him to abandon a really wrong act. But when actually confronted by the prospect of a fight against his kinsmen, he felt a disgust not only for that egoistic attitude of his but along with it for the duty of that righteous war too. His reason was overpowered by the idea that the sole aim of that great war was the gratification of his egoistic greed, and further that such a war against one's own family is invariably an immoral act. Due to all this confusion he began to talk of abandoning that righteous war itself.

The intellectual bewilderment of Arjuna about his duty was related to egoistic attachment in such an indirect manner. His bewilderment and non-performance of the duty were not for the fulfilment of any egoistic desire, but for its avoidance. While running away from egoistic attachment, he was escaping from duty itself. No doubt, his desertion of duty was not born of egoistic attachment, but nor was it born exclusively of an aversion for such attachment. The latter attitude of aversion had only a partial hand in causing it. The sudden upsurge of that aversion in his mind had served as an occasion for the appearance of that *moha*; but the latter had something else too at its bottom. Its source also included the absence of proper discrimination between the self and the not-self, and failure to decide as to which of two conflicting moral rules (the duty of protecting one's family and that of a righteous war) deserved to be followed at the time. Considering this source of Arjuna's *moha* in his philosophical ignorance, Kṛṣṇa points out the supreme importance of spiritual knowledge in the fourth canto, and then adds :

yajñātvā na punarmoham

evam yasyasi pāṇḍava

yena bhūtānyasēṣeṇa

drakṣyaśyātmanyatho mayi. IV/35.

"Having obtained the final knowledge, Arjuna, you will no more be liable to any such *moha*, and will behold all beings in Me as also in yourself." This verse throws a lucid light on the nature of Arjuna's *moha*. Due to ignorance he was taking a right act as a wrong one.

Due to 'kāma', but not for the sake of it.

It is hoped that the above statement that Arjuna's confusion had arisen not for the sake of (out of) egoistic attachment, though partly due to it—for the sake of opposition to it—will be sufficiently clear. It is essential for the correct appreciation of the central teaching of the Gītā. Let us elucidate the point further with the help of an illustration. Suppose a traveller while going his way sees a tiger, and catch-

ing fright rushes to a wrong track falling into a ditch. Now, it is clear that his abandonment of the right path (and stepping into the wrong one) was on account of the sight of the tiger, but nevertheless not *for the sake of it*. He did not desert the path to have a better view of the tiger; but on the contrary did so just to avoid it. Similarly, Arjuna was seeking to desert his path of duty not to gratify his egoistic passion but to keep away from it. The fulfilment of egoistic desires was not the aim of that *moha* of his. If, however, the traveller is a hunter, who having an indistinct view of the tiger leaves the path for a clearer view of the prey, his desertion would be not only on account of the tiger's sight but also for the sake of it. But the former traveller's desertion was not of that type. The two desertions obviously bear different relations to the tiger's sight. So also, the relation of Arjuna's *moha* to the egoistic passion is not of the same type as, and is in fact contrary to that described in the following verses in the second canto, "He who broods over sense objects develops an association with them; association breeds *kāma*, which in its wake produces anger. II/62. From anger results *sam-moha*, and from the latter a loss of memory.... II/63".

as *pātakam*, *dōṣa*, *pāpam* (sin, guilt); but when he came to express clearly this third idea he started referring to the deed as *mahat-pāpam* ('heinous sin') ! 'Alas ! In our greed for the pleasures of kingdom we (have sunk so low as to) have become ready to slay our own kinsmen ! What a heinous sin we are bent upon committing !' (I/45). This language clearly expresses his idea that the purpose of that war was the Pāṇḍavas' selfish greed. The same is again expressed in verse II/5 : "By slaying these elders, who have turned slaves of wealth, we would be securing only bloodstained pleasures, and that too in this life alone (with no good whatsoever in the life hereafter)." The misconception that the horrible war had been planned solely for the selfish enjoyments of himself and the other Pāṇḍavas had thus taken root in Arjuna's mind. And therefore he was refusing to take any part therein, lest he should be guilty of a heinous sin.

These ideas had created the confusion in Arjuna's mind. Being bewildered thereby, his deliberative reason began to look at a right act as a wrong one. In terms of the following verse in the Gītā his reason had at that time turned *tāmasī*, "Arjuna, that reason which being enveloped by *tāmas* actually regards the wrong itself as right and interprets every thing in a perverse manner is of the *tāmas* category."¹

True knowledge of the self to meet the first point.

Let us now see how these misconceptions of Arjuna have been refuted in the Gītā. In answer to the first point, Kṛṣṇa explained the pure unchanging nature of the self and the basic identity with the Divine Spirit, as also mutually with each other, of the selves appearing in diversity due to the contact with *prakṛiti*. It is with reference to this final metaphysical knowledge, that in the conclusion of the fourth canto, there occurs the well known observation *na hi jñānena sadṛśam pañcātmīya viśvate*. 'In this world there is nothing else as sacred as knowledge;' (IV/38); supplemented by the assurance that with the realisation of that knowledge Arjuna would no more be liable to the recurrence of any

1. XVIII, 32.

CHAPTER V.

KṚṢṆA'S REFUTATION OF ARJUNA'S 'MOHA'.

The detailed discussion in the last chapter has sufficiently brought out the true nature of Arjuna's *moha*. It was not born of egoistic attachment; instead, it was basically a confusion of the deliberative reason. The following analysis of that bewilderment and confusion will help a correct appreciation of its refutation by Kṛṣṇa.

Analysis of Arjuna's 'moha.'

(1) 'The death of my own people—family members, preceptors and friends—at my hands is inevitable in this war'.

(2) 'Such a war is a wrong act. Due to the destruction of the male members in the family, the timehonoured family rites and rituals will cease, and in consequence the females in the family will take to wrong path, and there will follow a licentious intermixture in society. It will bring about the degradation of the forefathers; and will lead the family slayer himself along with the rest of the family to hell. Likewise it is also well known that a fight against revered preceptors and friends is a condemnable act. In short, a war against one's family members, preceptors and friends—even though they be wicked and criminal—is clearly sinful'.

(3) 'Besides, the aim of this war is but the gratification of our greed for the pleasures of kingdom. Fie upon this egoism of ours that has dragged us down to such a level ! Family war is in itself already a sin; but on the top of that, to do it for the sake of one's egoistic desires is nothing short of a heinous sin.' While chiefly expressing the first two points upto verse I/44, Arjuna used only such monosyllabic words

such bewilderment (vide IV/35). And lastly the following clear direction has again been given to him :

*tasmādajñānasambhūtaṁ
hr̥tstham jñānāsindūmanah
chittvairam̐ saniscayan̐ yogam-
ātishṭhoitiṣṭha bhārata.* IV/42

“Therefore, cutting off with the sword of knowledge this doubt in your mind, born of ignorance, adopt the *yoga* attitude (of equanimity); and stand up (for this war)”.

The Gītā stresses the importance and sanctity of this knowledge at several places. Refuting the ‘un-Aryan’ (vide II/2) materialistic view of the identification of the physical body and the self, he has been repeatedly reminded of the pure nature of the latter. He has been told that it is only the body that is affected by the events in the world, nothing happening to its occupant, the pure self.

*ya enam̐ vetti hanitārāṁ
yaścainam̐ manyate hatam̐
ubhau tau na vijānīto
nāyam̐ hanti na hanyate.* II/19

“He who looks upon this self as the slayer and who looks upon it as slain, neither of them knows the truth; the self slays not, not is slain.” What is ordinarily known as death is an inevitable stage of ‘the change of bodies’.

*vāsāmsi jñmāni yathā vihāya
navāni gr̥hñāti narō'parāṇi
tathā śarīrāni vihāya jñmā-
nyanyāni samyāti navāni dehī.* II/22

“Just as a man casts off worn-out garments and dons other new ones, so does this self cast off worn-out bodies and take on other new ones (and it is this that the ignorant call as the death of a person)”. Since the self that abides in all beings is uncleavable by weapons, eternal, immutable and everlasting, there was no reason for Arjuna to grieve about the

impending righteous war and to entertain any fear of sin on that account : ‘Therefore, knowing this nature of the self, you ought not to grieve’ (II/25). If in performing one’s duty, it became necessary, after the failure of all fair attempts at peace, to fight in an inevitable righteous war even against one’s kith and kin, there was no reason for Arjuna to grieve or be afraid of sin in it.

*dehī nityamavadhyo'yaṁ
dehe sarvasya bhārata
tasmātsarvāṁ bhūtāṁ
na tvaṁ śocitumarhasi.* II/30

“Since this self that dwells in the body of every one is ever incapable of being slain, you should not grieve for any being”. All this topic being discussed in the *Kāṭha-upaniṣad*, the author of the Gītā has borrowed some of the verses and phrases from there and appropriately employed them here.

The true knowledge of the pure self is no doubt an important topic in the Gītā. Though the central idea of the Gītā is not mere knowledge accompanied by the physical renunciation of all action, nevertheless to turn Arjuna to his duty Kṛṣṇa has time and again explained the sublime spiritual and metaphysical knowledge. The stand of the Gītā’s author seems to be that one main aspect of Arjuna’s bewilderment consisted of lack of such knowledge, due to which he was viewing perversely his necessary duty at that time and was regarding a right act as wrong.

Real aim of that war.

As for Arjuna’s confusion about the basic purpose of that war, he had formed a wrong notion that it was being held merely for his royal pleasures. To remove that misconception Kṛṣṇa impressed upon his mind that the war was not merely for the self-interest of the Pāṇḍavas, but was meant for the wider good of humanity; and that Arjuna was ‘but an instrument’ (XI/33) in the process. Therefore the Lord manifested to his closest friend the vision of Universal Reality, and indicated that (the decision of) the physical end of those evil-minded persons (on that

battlefield) in the jaws of death had already taken place at the highest divine level. Crossing the distance unbridgable by anyone else, the Lord presented to Arjuna in an actual form the events that were to happen later in that great war. At that mysterious moment the Lord says:

*kālo'smi lokasyakṛtpararddho
lokāsamāhartumiha pravṛtīḥ
rte'pi tuāṁ na bhaviṣyanti sarve
ye'vasthītāḥ pratyānīkeṣu yodhāḥ.* XI/32

*mayāivāite nihatāḥ pūrvameva
nimittamātram bhava sayasācīn.*

XI/ 33 (latter half)

*droṇaṁ ca bhismaṁ ca jayadrathaṁ ca
karnaṁ tathāyānāpi yodhavīrān
mayā hatāṁśtvam jahi mā vyathīṣṭhā
judyasva jetaṁ raṇe sapatnān.* XI/34

“I am the (eternal) Time-Spirit (Kāla; Death; the destructive aspect of *Brahman*), the destroyer of the worlds, appearing in all the magnitude; and have come forth at this place to annihilate the people (assembled here). None of the combatants here in the armies shall escape death, even without you (even if your resolve not to fight,—32.....These have been already slain by myself; you now play the part, Arjuna, of its mere outward occasion (instrumental cause) —33. Droṇa, Bhīṣma, Jayadratha, Karna, and so also the other warriors have been already slain (i.e. have their death decreed) by Me. You slay them without hesitation; do not feel distressed (by the fear of sin); wage this war; you will conquer the enemy on the field. —34.”

Why did Lord Kṛṣṇa himself take so much interest in that horrible war, and accepting the charioteership of Arjuna, persuaded him for the same?

*na me pārthāsti kartavyaṁ
triṣu lokeṣu kīṛcana*

*nānavāptamavāptavyaṁ
varta eva ca karmaṇi.* II/22

“Arjuna, there is nothing in all the three worlds necessary to be done by me as such (for my own sake); nor is there anything that I lack and have to obtain. Nevertheless I do perform action.” Why then does the Lord perform such acts? Here is the sole purpose behind it: “Arjuna, whenever righteousness suffers a decline and evil is on the ascendance, I bring about my own birth (incarnate myself in this world) — IV/7. For the protection of the good, the destruction of the evildoers and the establishment of righteousness, I take birth from age to age—IV/9”. The fact that Lord Kṛṣṇa himself was siding with the Pāṇḍavas in that war in opposition to Bhīṣma, Droṇa, and the Kauravas, itself made clear the real universal aim of that great war. It was not being waged, as erroneously thought by Arjuna, solely for the Pāṇḍavas’ desire for kingdom; its broad purpose consisted of the protection of the good, chastisement of the wicked, and thereby the firm establishment of righteousness in the society as a whole.

Reply to the second contention.

There still remains the second element in Arjuna’s confusion. With the other misconceptions disposed of in the above manner there was no need of a separate detailed refutation of it. However, the idea of some writers that the Gītā has avoided the point is not a correct one, it having been touched and replied to the necessary extent. Arjuna had heard that a war against preceptors, kinsmen and friends is a very wrong act. And as a common rule no doubt it is so. How was even the author of the Gītā to dispute it? Nevertheless, sometimes extraordinary circumstances necessitate an exception to a rule from the non-egoistic standpoint of fundamental morality itself. He who seeks to cling to the letter of the rule on such an occasion will in fact prove to be the violator of it (its basic purpose); and he who will violate it at the proper moment in a proper manner will have really followed it.

The moral quality of action is not of a stereotyped fixed nature in this respect, like the set theorems in mathematics; its determination being often a very complicated affair.

<i>kiṁ karma kimakarmeti</i>	
<i>kavayo'pyatra mohitāḥ</i>	
<i>tatte karma pravakṣyāmi</i>	
<i>yaj-jñātvā mokṣase'subhāt.</i>	IV/16
<i>karmaṇo hyapi boddhavyaṁ</i>	
<i>boddhavyaṁ ca vikarmaṇaḥ</i>	
<i>akarmaṇasāca boddhavyaṁ</i>	
<i>gahanā karmaṇo gatiḥ.</i>	VI/17
<i>karmāṇyakarma yaḥ paśyed-</i>	
<i>akarmāṇi ca karma yaḥ</i>	
<i>sa buddhimānmanuṣyeṣu</i>	
<i>sa yuktāḥ kṛtsnakarmakṛt.</i>	IV/18

“Even the scholars are bewildered in determining what precisely is action (or, right action) and what is not; I shall explain to you (therefore) that nature of action (or the action of that nature) knowing which you will remain free from evil—16. It is necessary to understand the nature of action, of wrong action, and of the absence of action. Mysterious (very intricate) indeed is the course (nature) of action—17. He who realises in action the absence of it, and in its absence the presence of it, is the wise among men, the *yogin*, the complete doer of action (for, the ignorant who follows only the letter and does an act will be said to perform it but partially, while he who does it with the realisation of its real nature does it in the true sense)—OR, he alone in spite of doing all sorts of acts (necessary and right in the circumstances) remains firm in the *yoga* of equanimity (does not lose the equanimity of his reason)—18”. One who on an appropriate occasion opposes a person treading a wrong path is in fact his true friend though appearing otherwise; and a friend who hesitates to do so at that time would in fact be his opponent. It is possible that those who consider ethics only in a literal and superficial fashion

would on such an occasion condemn the former and praise the latter; but the wise should not be misled by such censure and praise. Expressing this viewpoint, the Sanskrit poet Bhartṛhari excellently suggests in one of his verses the distinction between true followers of the moral path and the (bare) scholars of ethics, when he says: “No matter whether those well-versed in (the letter of) ethics censure or praise, whether prosperity remains or deserts, and whether death were to come today or after ages, the truly wise do not swerve from the path of morality and goodness.”¹ Therefore, the Gītā directs that instead of judging an act on the basis of the mere letter of the rule, one ought to perform selflessly the right act in the light of true knowledge and a due consideration of the environment. It is from this point of view that when concluding the fourth canto, starting with the remark “mysterious is the course (nature) of action (IV/17), Kṛṣṇa has in the end given to Arjuna the clear direction to stand up for that war.

Righteous war more sacred than loyalty to kinsmen.

True indeed that a war against one's elders, family members and friends is ordinarily a bad act. But what is to be done if those elders, kinsmen and friends, turn wicked and ‘criminal’, flout all principles of justice, spurn all attempts at peaceful mediation, and armed with weapons stand up for fight? Arjuna himself had admitted that the Kauravas standing against him on that field were ‘worst criminals’, (I/36), ‘with their hearts corrupted by greed’ (I/38). It was implied in his own words that the war was for the sake of justice and in opposition to gross injustice. Therefore without dilating at length on that point, Kṛṣṇa has in the second canto itself clearly reminded Arjuna that the war was of no mean type but a righteous one (*dharma yuddha* II/31); thereby indicating that while a fight against one's elders, kinsmen and friends is otherwise a sinful act, that consideration is out of place in such a righteous war.

1. *Niśātaka*, 83.

When one compares minutely in this connection the opening language of Arjuna with the words occurring in the reply of Kṛṣṇa, it becomes clear how the abovesaid second contention of Arjuna has been aptly replied in the Gītā. Arjuna had urged :

na ca śreya'nupaśyāmi

hatvā sujanamāhave.

I/31

"I fail to see any true good out of a slaughter of one's own kinsmen in this war", to which Kṛṣṇa's reply is :

dharmyādhi yuddhāt śreya'nyat

kṣatriyasya na vidyate. II/31

"for a member of the warrior class there is no greater good than a righteous war." Arjuna had merely said 'in a war'; in reply Kṛṣṇa suggests that the event under consideration was not only a war but a 'righteous war'; and that therefore even if it involved kinsmen it would not stand in the way of the true good for a warrior like Arjuna. Again, Arjuna had urged that the Pāṇḍavas would be guilty of 'heinous sin' as a result of that war against their own kinsmen (vide I/45). The reply to it is that it was in fact by not waging the war that sin would accrue to him. "If you will not fight this righteous war you will fail in your duty, lose honour, and instead incur (nothing but) sin." (II/33).

Further, while describing the evils of family destruction Arjuna's main contention was that it results in a downfall of righteousness in the family and the ascendance of evil instead. "With the destruction of the family are lost its age-long traditions and customs, with the disappearance of which the entire family passes under the grip of unrighteousness (*adharmah abhibhavati*)—I/40." To this Kṛṣṇa replies that if Arjuna's performance of the duty of that righteous war results in any such incidental consequences, it was not a matter of worry for the latter only. Even the Lord himself is always watchful about the rise of righteousness and the fall of evil: "Arjuna, whenever righteousness (*dharma*) suffers a decline, and evil (*adharma*) is on the ascendance (*abhyutthā-*

nam), I bring about my own birth (incarnate myself in this world). IV/7". The similarity between the words *dharma*, *adharmā*, *abhyutthāna* and the like in this verse and the above expressions of Arjuna is worth noting. Let us come to Arjuna's concern for the licentious intermixture expressed in verses 41 and 42 of the first canto. Kṛṣṇa indicates in the following remarks that even that point did not escape his attention : "If I cease to act, these worlds will be ruined; and I shall be responsible for causing *saṁkara* (licentious intermixture) as also the destruction of these peoples." (III/24)

Refutation by broadening the viewpoint.

The idea behind such indirect refutation of Arjuna's misconception on this point seems to be to suggest that while he was thinking only of his own family, Kṛṣṇa was looking at the matter from a broader viewpoint; and that therefore though his above contentions might be otherwise reasonable, they were but insignificant in the light of the latter standpoint. With this idea Kṛṣṇa calls them mere 'sophistry' in verse II/11, and has not furnished an independent refutation of them. The other misconceptions were of a somewhat different nature. The halftruth in the present confusion stands exposed of itself, no sooner the narrow angle of vision is replaced by a broader one.

Here is an illustration. If on a grave offence of robbery being proved against an accused, the judge's mind is bewildered at the time of passing the sentence, and he starts protesting that as a result of sending the convict to gaol his wife and children would be thrown on the streets and may possibly take to the wrong path, would such a contention be sound ? Since the commission of the offence deserving imprisonment has been judicially established, sin would accrue to the judge not by sending the accused to prison but by not doing so. The purpose of sending the convict to prison lies in the general social good and not in the judge's personal pay. And taking this into consideration, the unhappy effects of that event on the convict's own family, while within the bounds of possibility, ought to be dismissed as irrelevant at the time; though, any attempt to minimise those consequences as far

as possible without affecting the social good would be always praiseworthy.

Reply to Arjuna's prajñāvāda ('sophistry').

Arjuna was labouring under a similar error as the above judge. His arguments would have had force against an unrighteous family war. But the war in question was a 'righteous one' worthy of a true warrior, verily 'an open door to heaven' (II/32)—being started after the failure of all peaceful conciliatory attempts for securing justice and with due notice to the opponent. The unjust exile of the Pāṇḍavas to the jungles, the usurpation of their kingdom by the Kauravas, and the total refusal to return it even after the stipulated period, involved a great ascendance of evil on the social scale. On a consideration of all this, the concern of Arjuna for licentious intermixture and the cessation of his own family rites gets its own reply. As said above, it was for the Pāṇḍavas a 'righteous war' of a far wider import.

It was on this account that Kṛṣṇa was seeking again and again to take Arjuna out of the narrow angle of vision and establish him in a broad standpoint. While the latter was grieving over his own kinsmen, Kṛṣṇa did not confine the reply to that point only, but expressed the following general observation: 'Therefore you should not grieve for any being' II/30. While in his talk Arjuna had referred to his authorship only of the act of that war, in the reply he was told that philosophically speaking, what of that particular act the self does no act whatever.

śrāvakarmāṇi manasā

saṁnyasyāste sukham vaśi

navadvāre pure dehi

naiva kurvāṇa kārāṇa.

V/13

"(The self of) the person, who has attained mastery over the senses, renouncing mentally all actions happily resides in this city of nine gates (the body) without acting or causing anything to be done." Arjuna's worry was only about a licentious intermixture on the part of his own

family; whereas Lord Kṛṣṇa was worrying about the spread of such evil in the society at large. Arjuna was feeling grief only over the idea of the *kula-kṣaya*, i.e., destruction of his own family; before the Lord's vision there was the idea of the colossal *loka-kṣaya*, i.e., destruction of the people in general, in comparison with which the former idea was but a trifle. "I am the (eternal), Time-Spirit (*kāla*); Death; the destructive aspect of *brahman*), the destroyer of the worlds (*lokakṣayakṛt*), appearing in all the magnitude, and have come forth at this place to annihilate the people (assembled here) XI/32." Arjuna was considering the rise and fall of righteousness and evil with reference to his family alone; the Lord was worrying about the righteousness and evil in the world as a whole.

In this manner the halftrue sophistry in the second point has been duly replied just by a broadening of the viewpoint. The following apt observations in the conclusion of the Gītā obviously referring to Arjuna's present contention, will show that his objection regarding the possible corruption of family ladies did not escape the attention of the author of the Gītā. Some such evil consequences as apprehended by Arjuna could be possible to some extent even from that righteous war; it was no use unnecessarily denying altogether that possibility. However, in this imperfect world what perfect action is possible so as to result only in unmixed good? Some defect or other is bound to be involved in the consequences of each act. The course of wisdom therefore lies in always thinking with discrimination, and performing that act the consequences of which are on the whole more good than bad.

sahajam karma kaunteya

sadoṣamāpi na tyajet

sarvārambhā hi doṣeṇa

dhūmenāgnirivāpyatah.

XVIII/48

"Arjuna, one ought not to abandon one's duty following from one's own nature, though that duty be accompanied by some drawback; for in any case, just as fire is accompanied by smoke, all acts whatever are accompanied by

some drawback or other". The basic nature and purpose of that deed being a very wide one, more evils would have followed its non-performance than otherwise. Therefore, repeating verbatim the first half of verse III/35, the Gītā states again in the eighteenth canto :

*śreyāṁsvadharmo vigrahaḥ
paradharmāṁsvanusthīāt
svabhāvanīyatam karmā
kuruṇāpnōti kilbiṣam.*

XVIII/47

"One's own duty though imperfect is preferable to another's though easy to follow; one does not incur sin by performing the duty (even though with some drawback) determined according to his nature". In view of this Arjuna has been asked to fix his eye on the basic necessity and righteousness of that war and to wage it without any hesitation, notwithstanding any incidental drawbacks.

Now, as for Arjuna's further point (vide I/42) that due to the cessation of the family rites and rituals his forefathers would be "deprived of the obsequial offerings of rice and water" and consequently suffer a fall, the ignorance and confusion involved in such a contention is but obvious.¹ It is not possible that for the fault or sin of one some other should suffer a degradation. It could for once be urged that the progeny failing to perform the said offerings would itself go down; but the fall of the forefathers due to the aberration of the descendants is hardly conceivable. For in the view of the Gītā, "One alone is his own friend (benefactor), and himself his own enemy too" (VI/5). If those ancestors have themselves led a proper life, there is no question of their fall due to the shortcomings of their descendants.

1. However, Arjuna only speaks of his forefathers 'suffering a fall'; not (as supposed by several writers) of their fall 'into hell'. All that he says in verse I/42 is that the family slayer himself goes to hell along with the rest of the existing family; and due to such degenerate descendants giving up the acts of obsequial offerings, the forefathers suffer a fall (from the heaven etc.).

*....na hi kalyāṇakṛtskad--
durgatīm tāta gacchati.* VI/40

"My dear friend, none who does good (in his life) goes to a bad state." On the other hand, when their stock of merit would be exhausted, no amount of offerings of obsequial rice and water would hold them on above.

*te taṁ bhuktṛā svargalokam viślām
kṣīṇe pūnye martyalokam viśanti.....* IX/21

"Having enjoyed the vast world of heaven, they come back to (are reborn in) this mortal world, on their stock of merit being exhausted." Not to speak of any other place, even if Arjuna's forefathers were gone to the abode of God Brahmā, no one can have a permanent residence there too.

*ābrahmabhuvanāḷlokāḥ
punarāvartino' rjuna
mānuṣeḥ tu kaunteya
punarjanna na vidyate.* XIII/16

"Arjuna, sooner or later one has to suffer a return back from all the worlds including (even the highest of them viz.) the abode of God Brahmā. On attaining Me, however, there is no more any rebirth."

Removal of Arjuna's fear of sin.

Finally, as for the idea, which as a result of all these misconceptions had been entrenched in Arjuna's mind, that he would be guilty of heinous sin on account of waging that war, Kṛṣṇa has time and again refuted it with the same emphasis. Warning him at the very outset that he would in fact incur sin if he were to avoid that war (II/33), Kṛṣṇa has immediately proceeded to assure Arjuna on the contrary that no sin would accrue to him by waging that war (II/38). Assuring in verse IV/35 the complete eradication of that bewilderment of his by the realisation of

knowledge, and seeing that the bewilderment was intimately associated with the fear of sin in Arjuna's mind Kṛṣṇa immediately adds :

*api cedasi pāpebhyah
sarvebhyah tūpakṛttamaḥ
sarvaṁ jñānaplavenatva
vijñāni santariṣyasi.*

IV/36

“Even if you are the most sinful of all sinners you will cross over all sin by the barge of knowledge.” Thereafter, in the fifth canto the following further assurance is given :

*brahmanyādhiāya karmāṇi
saṅgaṁ tyaktvā karoti yaj
lipyate na sa pāpēna
padmapatramivāmbhasā.*

V/10

“He who performs actions, surrendering them to *brahman* and giving up all attachment, remains as untouched by sin as the lotus leaf by water.” It is again observed in the sixteenth canto from the same angle :

*daivī sampadvimokṣāya
nibandhāyāsūrī matā
mā śucaḥ sampadaṁ daivīm—
abhiyāto'si pāṇḍava.*

XVI/5

“The divine character (group of qualities) is regarded as leading to liberation and the demoniacal one to bondage. Arjuna, you are born to the former; do not grieve.” This observation too has in view the fear of sin as well as the concern for Liberation and true good in the mind of Arjuna. ‘Do not grieve; without the least hesitation wage this war; thereby you will not lose the true good; your place is definitely on that path’—such is the substance of the above assurance. In fact, the very end of the Gītā discourse again contains this assurance of immunity from sin :

*sarvadharmāṇparityajya
māmekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja*

*aham tuā sarvapāpebhyo
mokṣayisyāmi mā śucaḥ.* XVIII/66

“Abandoning all *dharma*s (paths) resign yourself exclusively unto Me. Do not grieve; I will liberate you from all sins (evils)”. In these sublime words the Lord has given the final assurance to Arjuna and concluded his discourse; and the latter too on his part gave the counter-assurance that all his bewilderment was gone and that he was ready for the war.

Subjective purity in the performance of duty.

What the discussion has so far established is, however, that the war in question was a right (*kārya*) act. It has not touched the problem of the ideal subjective attitude with which that war should have been performed. A complete desertion of duty is dangerous from the individual as also the social point of view; the higher the social status of a person the more serious are the consequences of such desertion. There is a natural tendency in other members of the society to imitate those higher up.

*yadyadācarati śreṣṭhas
tattadevetaro janaḥ
sa yalpṛamāṇaṁ kurute
lokastadanuvartate.* III/21

“Whatever a great man does, so do the other (common) men; the standard set by him is followed by the masses”. Therefore, the first and foremost aim of Kṛṣṇa was to turn Arjuna to the performance of his duty.

Having thus first removed his confusion about the duty, Kṛṣṇa proceeded to supplement it from the viewpoint of the ideal life, by an exposition of the pure subjective attitude to be adopted while performing the duty. This place assigned to the purity of the subjective attitude in the scheme of the ideal action deserves careful attention. Once Arjuna clearly understood that basically the war was a right act, he could if he so chose perform it even with a personally egoistic viewpoint :

hato vā prāpsyasi svargam
jitvā vā bhoksyase mahīm
tasmāddutiṣṭha kaunteya
yuddhāya kṛtaniscayaḥ 11/37

"If (in this righteous war) you are slain you will go to heaven; and if victorious, you will enjoy the earth; stand up, therefore, Oh son of Kuntī, with a determination to fight."¹ If an act is basically right (*kārya*), it is better to perform it even with a personally egoistic viewpoint rather than avoiding it altogether.² However this mode of performing duty is obviously of inferior merit. The best manner of performing duty is to do it with the pure selfless attitude. The Gītā too regards it in the same light.

Dual aspect of the pure subjective attitude.

This pure subjective attitude has two aspects namely the *niskāma* (devoid of egoistic attachment) and the *nirahankāra* (devoid of the ego sense). Out of these the latter is often overlooked, and the former regarded as the only characteristic of the purity of the agent's subjective attitude. As a matter of fact the elimination of the ego sense is not only different from, but higher to, the elimination of egoistic attachment. One is inclined to say that one principal, though not exclusive, speciality of the Gītā gospel is to be found in this unique direction for the elimination of the ego-sense. From the notion of one-self as the enjoyer there arises the egoistic attachment (*kāma*); and from the notion of oneself as the doer arises the sense of doership (*ahankāra*). To get rid of the first means the

1. Several writers render *hatah* mildly as meaning 'if you die'. But its plain sense is 'if you are killed'—and that too while engaged in fighting. He would not have secured heaven had he been killed even on that very field at the hands of the enemy, but in the manner suggested by him in verses 1/35 and 46.

2. The distinction between a basically egoistic (*kāmya*) act, and one which though not so is performed by the doer with an egoistic attitude (*sakāma*), is clarified later in the fifteenth chapter.

non-egoistic viewpoint; and of the second the egoless one.

Even when the idea of oneself as the enjoyer subsides, and like Arjuna one becomes non-egoistic, that of oneself as the doer may persist. That indeed is the last source of the bondage of action. To entertain in one's mind, even while performing action, the firm conviction that one is not its doer in the ultimate sense, is a very difficult stage and goes even beyond the non-egoistic attitude. Man is entangled in the bondage of action due to the attachment towards it in the form of its authorship. The non-egoistic attitude frees one from the bondage of its 'fruit.' But by the elimination of the ego-sense he is freed from the bondage of action itself. The Gītā distinguishes at several places non-attachment for the 'fruit' from non-attachment for the action itself; and directs us to keep away from attachment in both these senses.¹ The non-egoistic attitude, of course if supplemented by the performance of right action, can raise a man to the *satva* quality; but if advancing further, the absence of the idea of oneself as the doer also becomes ingrained in one's attitude, he will attain the supreme state of "transcending the three qualities" (*triguṇātita*).²

In concluding the account of the *brāhmi* state, the Gītā has made a mention of the absence of the ego-sense separately from that of egoistic attachment:

vihāya kāmān yaḥ sarvān-
pumāṃścarati nihspṛhaḥ
nirmamo nirahankāraḥ
sa śāntimadhigacchati. 11/71

"He attains tranquility who abandoning all *kāma*-desires lives (moves about) free from all longings, selfishness and the ego-sense." Here the word *nirmamo* indicates the absence of the idea of oneself as the enjoyer, while the word *nirahankāraḥ* the absence of the idea of oneself as the doer. It is a wrong impression that the non-egoistic attitude is the

1. Thus, for example, see verse VI/4.

2. See Gītā, XIV/19-26.

only characteristic of the ideal act according to the Gītā. Firstly, such an act ought to be right (*kārya*), actually desirable from the objective point of view¹; then it ought to be non-egoistic, and lastly devoid of the ego-sense too. Of course the real implication of the act being of a non-egoistic and egoless type is that while performing it the doer's attitude should be so. While the *kārya* aspect (rightness) is a characteristic of the act itself, the non-egoistic and egoless aspects are the qualifications of the doer, i.e. of his subjective attitude. With both the doer and the act of a pure character there results the ideal act.

The 'nirahankāra' attitude.

The lesson of this attitude of egolessness is that man's self, which in its real nature is without any attributes and modifications, does nothing; whatever action his body is seen to perform being due to the play of the qualities of 'physical nature' (*prakṛiti*.) It being so, it is a sign of ignorance to entertain the ego-sense, taking to oneself the authorship of action.

tattvaṁ tu mahābāho

guṇakarmavibhāgayoh

guṇā guṇeṣu vartanta

iti matvā na sajyate. III/28

prakṛter guṇasammūḍhāḥ

sajjante guṇakarmasu.... III/29

"But, Arjuna, he who realises the true character of the distinction of the qualities (of 'physical nature') and the actions knows all this to be but the interplay of the qualities amongst themselves, and therefore feels no attachment—28. (On the contrary) the ignorant, being beguiled by the qualities of physical nature, gets attached to the qualities and actions...29".

1. This point has been explained in details in Part Second.

naiva kiñcitkaromīti

yukto manyeta tattvaṁ

paśyanīśvānspṛṣṭvājighraṁ-

aśṅgacchansvapāśvasan. V/8

pralapanvīṣṭjāngghnam-

umṣānimṣānnapī

indriyāṇḍriyārtheṣu

vartanta iti dhāraṇa. V/9

"He who has realised the fundamental truth and attained *yoga* feels that (in reality) he does but nothing, only the senses being active with their respective objects, while seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, tasting, moving, sleeping, breathing, speaking, emitting, receiving, and even while opening and closing the eyes." With the same idea the Gītā also states :

prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni

guṇaiḥ karmāṇi sarvaśaḥ

ahankāravimūḍhātmā

kartāhamiti manyate III/27.

"While all actions are done by the threefold qualities of physical nature, he whose mind is overcome by ego-sense regards himself as the doer". Even those acting with the non-egoistic attitude can at times be liable to such delusion.

While the absence of the ego-sense is no doubt superior to the non-egoistic attitude, there is also another reason why the former has been assigned a higher place in the Gītā than the latter. While Arjuna had developed a nausea for egoistic attachment, and turned non-egoistic though for the time being, he had not given up the ego-sense. Though his inclination towards enjoyments had become suspended, the idea of oneself as the doer was persisting and operative in him; and from that angle he was thinking of his responsibility for that war and its consequences. Therefore, having first explained the real nature of the self, Kṛṣṇa thereafter proceeded to advise Arjuna to adopt the egoless attitude.

Interdependence of true knowledge and subjective purity.

The Gītā regards the non-egoistic and egoless standpoint as the twin aspects of the purity of the subjective attitude. As a matter of fact these are intimately connected with true knowledge of the self. The pure, eternal and unchangeable self is in reality neither an enjoyer nor a doer. The dawn of true self knowledge facilitates the adoption of such a non-egoistic and egoless attitude. But mere verbal knowledge of it does not immediately mould one's attitude. That knowledge has to be thoroughly imbibed in one's mind and temperament. When the non-enjoying character of the self is firmly established in the reason one turns non-egoistic, and when the action-lessness of it is so established he turns egoless. That is the supremely equanimous state of *yoga*. With the attainment of that state, the knowledge that was before only in the form of verbal understanding is now realised through direct experience. Thus are knowledge and *yoga* both interdependent, and from the final standpoint one and the same.

CHAPTER VI

OTHER VARIETIES OF 'MOHA'

We have so far discussed at length the first of the different kinds of *moha* mentioned in the fourth chapter, viz. that of the nature of abandonment of the right act due to intellectual confusion; and have seen how Arjuna's *moha* at that time belonged to that category. Let us now discuss the other varieties and see that Arjuna's case does not come under them.

Egoistic 'tamas'-natured abandonment of right action.

(2) In this kind of abandonment of the right act, one's reason becomes so dull due to drowsiness, indolence and the like, that hankering only after the state of quiet inactivity it has no tendency to perform any particular act. In the former variety, the man has a desire to act; but his reason, being unable to arrive at any decision as to the right and wrong, remains suspended in a whirlpool of doubt. In the present variety, on the other hand, there is no desire even to attempt any such decision. The person is content to remain just in a state of inaction. Arjuna's desertion of duty was obviously not of this type.

Arjuna's objection was not based on bodily fear.

Before turning to the next broad division of *moha*, the reader's attention may be invited to a frame of mind somewhat analogous to its first variety and yet not falling under *moha*. While that first variety involves an abandonment of right action due to confusion or non-functioning of the reason and belongs to the *tamas* nature, there is another kind of the abandonment of right action which the Gītā does not seem to list under that category. If one abandons a right act out of the fear of physical suffering involved in it, such a desertion of duty would belong to the nature of *rajas*.

*duḥkhamityeva yatkarma
kāyākleśahayātyajet
sa kṛtvā rājasam tyāgam
naiva tyāgaphalam labhet.* XVIII/8

“When one gives up an act just because it is painful, for fear of physical suffering, such abandonment of his is of the *rājas* category and he does not reap the fruit of (true) abandonment”. Such abandonment has its origin in the third of aversion towards personal pain, which as seen in the third chapter, is a form of *kāma*. The Gītā may have therefore associated this variety with *rājas*. Such an abandonment of action does not involve a confusion of the reason; in spite of knowing that a certain act is the duty, one avoids it due to the fear of physical suffering. Therefore such a desertion of duty is not classed as *moha*.

Had Arjuna sought to desert the field out of bodily fear, his action would have amounted to this type of abandonment. But his refusal for that war was the outcome of intellectual confusion, and therefore of the nature of *moha*, born of *tamas*; it was obviously not born of ‘the fear of physical suffering’. But in spite of this, one is surprised to find some writers assigning that refusal of his to this category. How could one expressing a readiness even for being killed by the enemy on the field in an unresisting state be described as subject to the fear of bodily suffering? It was the idea of ‘sin’, and not of any such suffering, that Arjuna was afraid of at that moment. To place Arjuna’s opposition to that war within the purview of the above verse is but one way of declaring him as subject to egoistic attachment.

The positive variety of ‘moha’.

(3) The acceptance of wrong act due to intellectual confusion:—This too is a sort of non-egoistic *moha*. While the kind already discussed is purely negative, this includes a positive acceptance of wrong act. Hence a man, though non-egoistic in mind and attitude, not only gives up a right act due to a confusion about the right and wrong, but is also further set upon performing some wrong act.

The deeds of many a religious or some other type of fanatic, though personally non-egoistic and fearless, would fall under this category. Had Arjuna’s reference to the life of beggary not been of a rhetorical nature, and if abandoning the war he had a real intention of pursuing that life as leading to the true good, that would have come under this category. But of course even then it could not have been said to originate in egoistic attachment.

(4) The acceptance of wrong act due to egoistic attachment:—In this variety the egoistic attachment so corrupts a man’s reason that he begins to mistake a wrong act for a right one and vice versa. It not only leads to the abandonment of a right act but also to the acceptance of a wrong one. Speaking of this influence of egoistic attachment, the Gītā observes: “It takes its seat in the senses, mind and reason; veiling knowledge by means of these it produces *moha* in the mind of man” (III/40). Those caught under the clutches of this egoistic *moha* go on performing all sorts of evil acts.

*kāmanāśritya duṣpūram
dambhamānamadānīlāḥ
mohadgrhītāsagrālān—
pravartante’ śucivratāḥ.* XVI/10

‘Those of evil will, pursuing the insatiable *kāma* and full of hypocrisy, conceit and arrogance, due to *moha* accepting false ideas (or, entertaining evil intentions) engage in activity (that is immoral and harmful to the world at large)’¹. Such acts must obviously be described as pertaining to the *tamas* nature.

*anubandham kṣayam himsām-
anapekṣya ca pauraṣam
mohādārabhyate karma
yattatātmasamucyate.* XVIII/55

‘An action commenced through *moha*, without a proper consideration of the pros and cons (consequences), possible

1. Besides, see verse XVI/16.

loss, violence, one's own capacity etc, is known as of the *tamas* category."

Offshoots of 'tamas'.

On account of a disregard of these various kinds of the *tamas*-natured *moha*, one sometimes comes across the idea that its only form is the negative attitude of desertion of duty. But it is wrong to suppose that the nature of *tamas* is restricted only to 'the absence of good conduct'; it includes not only the non-performance of right action but also the actual performance of the wrong. As stated by Rāmānuja, it means 'the tendency to wrong action due to the error (confusion) of the reason'.¹

In the thirteenth verse of the fourteenth canto the following four effects of the predominance of *tamas* have been stated: *aprakāśa* i.e. 'lack of light' (a state of being confused and perplexed); *apraṇīti* i.e. 'inertia' (lack of tendency to action); *pramāda*; and *moha*. The first of these connotes the incapacity of the reason to judge the right and the wrong; the reason groping in darkness and failing to see the path. With his reason unable to arrive at any decision correct or incorrect, as to the right and wrong, one is left whirling in the eddy of doubt and reduced to a piteous state.² By and large Arjuna was in such a frame of mind.

In 'inertia' there is such an extreme aversion to doing anything that one has no desire even for knowledge about the duty; and if he has it to any little extent, there is no tendency to act upon it. It is caused by drowsiness and indolence (vide verse XIV/8). While both 'lack of light' and 'inertia' involve ignorance about the duty and its non-performance, they differ in the following respect. In the former inspite of one's efforts the reason is unable to arrive at any decision as to the right and wrong; in the latter one has no desire even to try to know it. Let us now look at the difference between this *tamas*-type inertia and the *rajas*-type

1. *anavadhānanimittasakarmani prapñīh*. Commentary on verse XIV/17.

2. *aprakāśah kartavyākartavyavinekābhāvah*. ('*aprakāśa* means lack of discrimination between duty and nonduty')—Dhanapati's commentary on verse XIV/13.

abandonment of an act mentioned in verse XVIII/8. In the latter there is the knowledge of duty, but no desire to act accordingly due to the fear of physical pain. In 'inertia' there is no desire even to know the nature of the duty. When the indolent man refuses to perform an act, his refusal is born merely out of satisfaction in the continuance of the existing state of inaction! In the *rajas* variety the person is unwilling to do only the specific painful act, but is willing to do another not so painful.¹

'Lack of light' and 'inertia' are the negative forms of the *tamas* quality, involving only the non-performance of right action. On the contrary, *pramāda* (aberration) involves positive tendency for wrong action. Now remains *moha*, the fourth effect of *tamas*. As a matter of fact, instead of treating it as an independent variety, it is possible to regard it as the ignorance or confusion about duty, the confounding of the reason, which is present in more or less proportion in the other three varieties. It has been used in this sense at several places in the Gītā. Therefore, interpreting *moha* in this broad manner, it can be classified into two varieties; the purely negative form (born of 'lack of light' and 'inertia'), and the positive wrong tendency (of the nature of *pramāda*). It is this interpretation that has been followed in the present work; and accordingly the former variety has been named above as the abandonment of right action² and the latter as the performance of a wrong one.

But if it is not intended to put this broad interpretation on the word *moha*, and it is to be regarded as a

1. There are thus the following three varieties of the non-performance of right action—(1) due to fear of bodily suffering—the *rajas* type; (2) due to intellectual lack of light—of the *tāmasa* non-egoistic type; (3) due to inertia born of drowsiness and indolence—of the *tāmasa* egoistic type.

2. Of course the *tāmasa* state of inactivity, and the state of *akarma* or actionlessness experienced philosophically in the very performance of action on the realisation of final knowledge (vide verses IV/17 to 20) are different things.

fourth variety of *tamas* alongside the other three, it would be possible to interpret it as the slackness of reason, forgetfulness incapacity of understanding, or weakness of intellect.

'*Tamas*' includes positive tendency to wrong

Thus the nature of *tamas* not being restricted to mere absence or non-performance of action, extends also to a positive tendency towards wrong conduct. This is also clear from the above quoted verse XVIII/25. Under the influence of *rajas* a man performs action, on the whole of the right type, but prompted by egoistic motive.¹ The tendency to wrong action comes under *tamas* and not *rajas*. One often comes across the confusing practice of including the tendency to wrong action under *rajas* instead of *tamas*. For instance, while explaining the remark in verse XIV/18 that those of the *sattva* nature ascend upwards, those of *rajas* remain at the intermediate state, while those of *tamas* sink downwards, the Sanskrit commentator Dhanapati observes that he who actually performs the 'wrong' type of acts attains the middle state, while he who only abandons the right act due to drowsiness, indolence and the like, merely sitting still, sinks to a more downward state. This seems hardly consistent and tenable. However the original observations in the Gītā itself are free from such inconsistencies.

All this is the outcome of the misconception that *tamas* is purely negative in character—of the form of lack of active tendency; and that all positive tendency for actions, right or wrong, is included in the *rajas* attitude. Sri Aurobindo's following observations also express the same idea: "The essence of *rajas* is movement and impulsion and kinesis, *prāṇīti*, but the essence of *tamas* is inertia, *apraṇīti*. *Tamas*

1. See verse XVIII/34 *yayā tu dharmakāmāsthān, dhṛtvā dhārayate 'ri-una; prasāṅgena phalākāṅkṣī, dhṛtiḥ sā pārthia rājasī'* Arjuna, that steadfastness (of the will) by which one holds on to righteousness, (rational) *kāma*, and (reasonable) wealth, being desirous of the 'fruit' suitable to the occasion, is of the *rajas* category." Some writers interpret *prasāṅgena* as meaning 'with intense attachment', instead of as 'suitable to the occasion'.

is inertia of nescience and inertia of inaction, a double negative."¹ In this account of *tamas*, attention has been concentrated only on its negative aspects viz. *aparakāśa* ('inertia of nescience'), and *apraṇīti* ('inertia of inaction'), overlooking *pramāda* which implies a positive tendency to the wrong.² But a look at the text of the Gītā itself will show that its author has pointedly assigned to *pramāda* a place under *tamas* alongside, nay more important than, that to these negative aspects. See the following verses in the fourteenth canto: "But know that *tamas* is born of ignorance and leads all persons to *moha*, tempts them to the wrong path; it binds them with *pramāda*, indolence and drowsiness—8. While *sattva* produces attachment for happiness, and *rajas* for action, *tamas* by shrouding knowledge leads one to *pramāda*—9. And, Arjuna, when *tamas* predominates, lack of light (a state of being confounded and perplexed), inertia, *pramāda*, *moha*, these are produced—13. From *sattva* results knowledge, and from *rajas* but greed; from *tamas* result *pramāda*, *moha*, and also ignorance—17". In each of these four verses *pramāda* has been mentioned unfailingly in connection with *tamas*. In the ninth verse while describing its offshoots in a nutshell, *pramāda* alone has been mentioned to the exclusion of every thing else. The thirteenth verse mentions them all at length. In the seventeenth *apraṇīti* has again been dropped.

That in the province of *tamas* the Gītā assigns more importance to the positive wrong tendency than to the mere absence of the active tendency is also clear from the following observations. In the seventeenth canto a classification of faith, food, sacrifice, austerities, charity and the like into the three types viz. *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* has been given, along with a separate definition of each of them. If *tamas* is supposed to have only the negative form of inertia, these definitions would not be possible at all. As stated in the following verse, the faith of *tamas* type involves not only the absence of devotion to proper objects, but also a positive devotion to the evil ones: "Those of the *sattva* worship the

1. *Essays on the Gītā*, second series, p. 252-53.

2. Śaṅkara explains *pramāda* as only the 'non-performance of necessary duty' (*prāptikartavyācharaṇam*).

gods, those of *rajas* worship such supernatural beings as the *yakṣāṁsi* and the *raksāṁsi* (heavenly officers and guards), while the rest of *tamas* nature worship ghosts and evil spirits." (XVII/4) Similarly the *tamas* type of dinner means not a mere fasting or abstinence from eating, but a positive tasting of unwholesome food :

yātayāmaṁ gatarasaṁ
pūti paryuṣitaṁ ca yat
ucchiṣṭamaṇi cāmedhyaṁ
bhojanam tāmasapriyam. XVII/10

“Half-cooked, vitaminless, putrid, stale, left over as part-eaten, and unclean—such is the food that the *tamas* type of person relishes”. Look also at the definition of the *tamas* type of sacrifice :

vidhīhīnamasṣtāmanāṁ
mantrahīnamadakṣiṇam
śraddhāvīrahitam yajñān
tāmasaṁ paricakṣate. XVII/13

“The sacrifice not in accordance with the proper procedure, devoid of the offering of food, unaccompanied by the chanting of hymns, not followed by the gift of money, and without a basis in faith, is known as of the *tamas* category.” So also in verse XVII/19 there is the definition of the *tamas* type of austerities and in XVII/21 of the same type of charity. Besides, knowledge of *tamas* type has been defined in verse XVIII/22. And last but not the least, by defining the *tamas* type of action in XVIII/25, and of the *tamas* type of doer in XVIII/28, the misconception that *tamas* has only a negative nature of the lack of active tendency has been thoroughly refuted. All these definitions obviously have a reference to the *pramāda* aspect of *tamas*. While it has been said in verse IV/17 that it is necessary to understand the true nature of action, non-action and wrong action, the subsequent portion of that canto only explains the nature of action, and indicates how philosophically

speaking action itself can amount to actionlessness. But there is no elucidation of wrong action as such at that place. That, as the reader will now see, has been provided by the author of the Gītā through these definitions in the seventeenth and eighteenth cantos.

It is in consideration of all this that *moha* has been classified above into the two broad kinds—the mere non-performance of right action and a positive performance of the wrong one; and further each of these has been subdivided into the non-egoistic i.e., born of mere intellectual confusion, and the egoistic.

Arjuna's 'moha-kalilam.'

Arjuna's *moha* falls under the first of these varieties i.e. non-egoistic non-performance of right action. But even if it is held with Śankara and others, that Arjuna besides giving up his own duty had also actually stepped into that of another, and that therefore his *moha* was of the second variety, still it cannot be classed as egoistic. His refusal for that war was based, not on any egoistic attachment for personal enjoyments, or a concern for his own worldly pleasures and pains, but in fact on his intense opposition to such things. And yet, curiously enough, several writers maintain that the *moha* of Arjuna was founded on *kāma*; and on account of it are seen to put a wrong interpretation on the verse :

yadā te mohakalilam
buddhirvyatitariṣyati
tadā gantāsi nirvedaṁ
śrotasyasya śrutasya ca. II/52

“When your reason shall extricate itself from the muddy slough of *moha*, you will feel indifference towards what has been heard and has to be heard.” Which is the ‘muddy slough of *moha*’ clouding the reason of Arjuna, referred herein ? We have already analysed the real nature of his intellectual bewilderment. Yet some writers interpret the word

moha in this verse as 'the desire for the enjoyment of pleasures.' Such an interpretation confuses *kāma* with *moha*. But even keeping aside the distinction between the two, what 'desire for the enjoyment of pleasures' can really be traced at the root of Arjuna's opposition to that war, of his mental state of utter bewilderment about the nature of the right and wrong (vide II/7)? Actually we find him talking of kicking even the pleasures of a mastery over the three worlds.

It should not be overlooked that the Gītā is definitely speaking of Arjuna's *moha-kalilam* and not *kāma-kalilam*. Arjuna's *moha* was not of the *kāma* type. Yet overlooking that, the said writers see in the words *nirvedam gantāsi* ("you will feel indifference") in the above verse, just the idea of 'developing a sense of renunciation towards sense enjoyments'. But, as will be clear from our discussion of the phrase 'bewildered by the *śruti*' (II/53), this word *nirvedam* ('indifference') is not here related to sense-enjoyments as such, but to whatever Arjuna had *heard* to the effect that the war under question was of a sinful character. Śāṅkara rightly explains the latter half of the verse as meaning that consequent on the removal of the *moha*, Arjuna "would feel complete indifference towards whatever has to be heard and has been heard." In short, that sense of renunciation or indifference was for the hearing (obtaining) of mere pedantic knowledge about the right and wrong, and not directly for the worldly pleasures and enjoyments as such.

CHAPTER VII

ARJUNA'S NON-ATTACHMENT TO RELATIONS

A common misunderstanding about Arjuna.

Several writers on the Gītā are greatly tempted to trace the source of Arjuna's abandonment of duty in personal attachment. Here is one more typical illustration of it. In his lectures on the Gītā Vinoba Bhavé observes with reference to the preliminary state of Arjuna 'When Arjuna looked around what did he find? On both sides was standing the assembly of his own relations, his own kith and kin... Seeing all that gathering of his own people his heart is touched. He feels great sorrow. Why so? Had an attitude of non-violence dawned upon him like Asoka? No, it was all a family attachment. Had there not been in front of him the preceptors, brethren, relations, even at that moment he would have tossed the heads of the foes like play-balls. But the *moha* born of attachment eclipsed his sense of duty. And then he remembered philosophy. Even when a dutiful person becomes subject to *moha* he does not bear a naked desertion of duty. He dresses it in some good thought. Precisely the same happened in the case of Arjuna. He now began to urge outwardly that war itself was an evil. He started explaining to Kṛṣṇa himself that due to war the family would be destroyed, religion would go down, licentiousness would increase, adultery would spread, famine would prevail, society would suffer and so on. I am reminded of the story of a judge. He had sentenced hundreds of accused to hanging. But one day his own son was produced before him as a murderer. The charge of murder being proved against him, the judge was called upon to pronounce the sentence of death upon him. But the judge wavered in doing so. He started argumentation. 'Capital punishment is inhuman. It does not become mankind to enforce it. It destroys the chance of reforming the man. The murderer committed the murder in the heat of emotion. But it is a shame and blot on the humanity of society to seriously hang a man on the scaffold after his own murder-

ous emotion has cooled down'! The judge started advancing such arguments. Had that son not appeared before him the august judge would have blissfully went on passing sentences of death. The judge began to talk thus due to his attachment for the son. That talk did not come from his inmost heart. It was born of attachment. It was a literature born out of the sense of egoism, 'this is my son'. Arjuna's state became like that of this judge. His arguments were not wrong..... But the only point for consideration is that it was not his philosophy, but his sophistry".¹

The source of Arjuna's *moha* is traced in this passage to his attachment for the worldly relations and family connections. One is entangled in such affection due to personal factors. The idea in the above extract is that it was in fact due to such affection that Arjuna was refusing to wage that war, and that the problem about the good and evil raised by him was but an outward cloak and pretence to hide it. Several others too have viewed the psychology of Arjuna from this angle.

He had no affection for the Kauravas.

Let us consider the illustration of the above judge.² Is there really any analogy between his viewpoint and that of Arjuna? The former was trying to justify the murder by his son out of affection for him; and therefore his anxiety was not only that he himself should not send the son to the gallows, but that no one else should do it, that the son should not be hanged at all. Behind the words "The murderer committed the murder in the heat of emotion" there is an obvious attempt to reduce the gravity of the criminal's act; and without doubt, it is due to the affection for the son. But we find hardly anything in the utterance of Arjuna in defence of the Kauravas. Apart from the expression 'wicked' applied to Duryodhana in verse 1/23, Arjuna even after the upsurge of *moha* (which is said to be due to affection for the Kaurava side) has not minced words in condemning the Kauravas and their partisans. Thus

1. *Gītā pravacane*, pp. 4-5. (Translation of original Marathi).

2. He has mentioned the same analogy of the judge in discussing Arjuna's *moha* elsewhere too. See *Sītītaprajñā-darśana*, p. 97.

he describes them as 'worst criminals' (1/36) 'corrupted by greed' (1/33), 'sinful enough to commit the grave sins of family slaughter and hostility towards friends' (1/38), 'cruel and violent enough even to take the life of an unarmed and unresisting person' (1/46), 'blinded by wealth' (11/5), and so on. He has not attempted to lessen or whitewash their guilt and wickedness, as he would have done had his desertion of duty been based on personal attachment for those blood relations. That judge is pleading for the accused. Arjuna does nothing of the kind. On the contrary he declares them as deserving of being slain.

The significance of the expression *ātātāyinaḥ* in verse 1/36 is usually not fully grasped. But in those ancient times it was laid down that an *ātātāyin* person deserved to be killed at sight without any hesitation, irrespective of his age, learning or social status, and that no sin attached to one who slayed him¹. In this light we can grasp the true purport of Arjuna's expression "Nothing but sin shall accrue to us as a result of killing these (kinsmen)—worst criminals (*ātātāyinaḥ*) though they are!" (1/36).² Arjuna means to say that even though ordinarily it may be proper and without any sin to slay such worst criminals, nevertheless these Kauravas being of our own family, a slaughter of them would land us into nothing but sin. In short, he had no doubt that but for the special feature that the parties were related by blood, the Kauravas deserved highest punishment.

It is therefore unfair to say that Arjuna's argument about the sin and evil was but a pretended hypocritical one, a mere window dressing; and that his turning away from that war was due in fact to affection for the Kauravas. The mind of the above judge being full of attachment for his son, the desperate effort of the father's heart was to anyhow save the son from death. But Arjuna's argument was not of that type. His chief contention is that (since the destruction of one's own family is a sin) he did not wish to wage that war with his hands. But he does not insist that if any one else were to inflict a proper punishment on those criminals

1. *Manu-Smṛiti*, VIII/350-51.

2. Dr. Radhakrishnan clearly translates *ātātāyinaḥ* as 'criminals'.

he would resist that too. He was primarily anxious that the sins of family destruction and a war against preceptors and friends should not visit him and the Pāṇdavas. Here is an illustration to distinguish such fear of sin from a sense of affection. Some families in India feel that they would be committing a sin if they slay a snake with their hands. If such a person finds a snake near him and says to a friend that he does not wish to kill it but would not mind if the friend did so, it is clear that he entertains no attachment as such for the reptile, but only a fear of sin in slaying it with his own hands. By and large the mental state of Arjuna may also be taken to be like that of such a person.

Death and slaughter.

That Arjuna's opposition was primarily to the slaughter of the Kauravas at his own hands, and not to their mere death, is also clear from the word *hatvā* ('having killed') occurring frequently in his mouth. Had there been in Arjuna's mind an affection for the enemy side, his objection would have extended to any kind of their death. His main anxiety, however, is not for their death as such, but for their slaughter by himself. Had they died in any other manner, what sin would have visited him¹? But would not a war against even such persons by himself amount to a great sin? In his utterances on the point we find little indication of any affection and sympathy as such for his foes—e.g. any thought that the Kauravas would suffer great bodily agony due to the wounds in that war, or that their deaths would drown their parents, widows and children in unbearable sorrow. On the contrary, we find him expressing far greater concern for the apprehension that such a war against one's own family

1. It is in this light that we should look at Arjuna's argument about the consequences of family-destruction. Such destruction by a natural calamity is one thing; and by mutual war in the family itself is another. Arjuna is thinking of the latter. See the clear word, 'family slayer' (I/42, 43), as also the expression 'the guilt in the annihilation of the family' (I/38, 39). The natural destruction has nothing to do with any guilt. Arjuna's concern was primarily about the sin. When the Lord gave an unambiguous answer to the fear of sin, Arjuna became ready for the war without minding the consequences on the family. The stand of the affectionate judge is a different one.

members might lead to their females taking to an immoral path and to the discontinuance of the family rites and customs.

Arjuna has repeatedly used the expression *hatvā* and its allied forms. While that very expression occurs in verses I/31, 36, 37, II/5, 6, there appears the allied word *hanantū* in I/35, 37 and 45, and *nihatya* in I/36. This makes it clear that Arjuna's mind was more apprehensive of the idea that 'those relations were going to be slain at his hands' rather than that 'they were about to die'. And in clear recognition of this attitude of his, Kṛṣṇa too has specially employed that very verb and sense in his reply. Thus, 'He who looks upon this self as the slayer (*hanātāram*) and who looks upon it as slain (*hataḥ*), neither of them knows the truth; the self slays not, nor is slain' (II/19). This language has a direct reference not to a mere natural death but to one by killing.

ajo nityaḥ śāsvato'yaṁ purāṇo

na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre. II/20

"This self is unborn, perpetual, everlasting and ancient and is not slain by the body being slain".

yedāvīṇśīnam nityam

ya enamañamavyam

katham sa puruṣaḥ pārtha

kaṁ ghātayati hanti kam. II/21

"How can he, Arjuna, who has realised this unchanging, beginningless, indestructible, eternal, unborn, imperishable Self slay any one or cause any one to be slain"? The same sense is implied in the words *nainam chindanti śāstrāṇi* (II/23, 'weapons cannot cleave the self'), *acchedyaḥ* (II/24, 'uncleavable'), and *avadhyaḥ* (II/30, 'incapable of being slain'). Even in the concluding canto Kṛṣṇa repeats: "One who has renounced all sense of the ego, and whose reason is free from attachment, even in slaying these people (in the due performance of duty—or, these people arrayed against you on this field) in fact slays not nor suffers any

bondage due to that act (is not required to pass through any unhappy state in consequence of it)" (XVIII/17).¹

Arjuna's further questions too indicate fear of sin.

In this connection one may also look at the questions raised by Arjuna from time to time in the midst of the discourse. What craving of the heart do they indicate? Not any attachment as such for the blood relations, but a real concern about good and evil, about the true well-being and moral downfall. See the following for instance, "Thou art as it were producing *moha* in my reason by thine equivocal observations. Tell me definitely, therefore, some one thing by which I shall attain the true good (*śreyah*)" (III/2). The query herein is clearly for the true good. At the end of this canto too, with his absorption in the same problem about the nature of sin, Arjuna puts the question :

*atha kena prayukto'yaṁ
pāpaṁ carati pūruṣaḥ
anicchanapī vārṣṇeya
balādina niyojitaḥ.* III/36

"But, Kṛṣṇa, what impels a man to commit sin, forced as it were from outside even against his own will?" So also, "How is it, Kṛṣṇa, that at one time thou dost advocate the renunciation of action and at another its performance? Tell me quite unambiguously which one of them is truly good?" (V/1). Shall we regard the question about the true good raised herein also as a hypocritical one? Similarly the following questions may also be seen :

*ayatiḥ śraddhayopeto
yogācalitamānaśaḥ
aprāpya yogasamiddhim
kāṁ gatim kṛṣṇa gacchati.* VI/37
*kaccinobhaya vibhraṣṭaś-
chinnābhramiva naśyati
apraṭiśṭho mahābāho*

1. This verse has been discussed in details in chapter fourteenth.

*vimūḍho brahmaṇaḥ pathi.
etanne saṁśayaṁ kṛṣṇa
chettumarhasyaśeṣataḥ
tvadanyaḥ saṁśayaśāsyā
chettā na hyupapadyate.* VI/38
VI/39

"Kṛṣṇa, what happens (after death) to him who is possessed of faith but whose mind is not stabilised in the state of *yoga* for want of adequate effort (in self-control), and who has therefore missed the goal of the perfect *yoga* state?—37. Is such a person, being baffled while on the path of *brahman*, and therefore without a firm footing, totally lost being deprived of both the goal of perfection as well as a happy after-death state, like a piece of cloud reduced to shreds?—38. You, Kṛṣṇa, can dispel completely this doubt of mine; I see none else fit to do so—39" These verses too manifest the same real anxiety about the true good, moral fall, spiritual wellbeing, etc. A look as his subsequent questions also will show the same.

Kṛṣṇa's reply also hardly refers to affection.

And even if we accept for a moment that Arjuna's mind was full of affection for the Kauravas, where do we find in Kṛṣṇa's reply any attempt for its removal? Did Kṛṣṇa somehow face the crisis by telling Arjuna any such pretences that the Kauravas and others, though no doubt his relations, were however in no real danger of their life in that war, as

1. At the first mention of the *yoga* path Kṛṣṇa says in verse II/40: "In this path of *yoga* whatever is once commenced is never lost; even a little practice of this saves one from great danger (of moral and spiritual fall)". In view of this clear assurance does not Arjuna's query in VI/38 amount to a repetition, as it seems already answered in II/40? Rāmānuja says that Arjuna desires here to hear the same point again in details. But while that may justify verse 37 which seeks the details of what happens to the person after death, it does not seem to quite explain the repetition in verse 38.

apprehended by him; that without so much as a scratch upon their bodies, they were only to be caught alive and let off after obtaining their signatures on a treaty? Actually Kṛṣṇa told him in no uncertain terms, that the death of the Kauravas in that war was a certainty. If brotherly affection was moving the heart of Arjuna at that moment, this certainty of the death of the Kauravas would not have induced him to aim his arrows at them; not even to play the part of a "mere instrument" in that war. But Arjuna, on the contrary, as soon as assured that anyhow the Kauravas were sure to meet with death in that war, and that no sin would accrue to him on that account, gave up his dejection and hesitation; and became quite ready to enter into a deadly combat with the same preceptors and relations of his! This itself shows what was really tormenting his mind at the time of his opening refusal for that war. An ethical conflict had arisen in his mind as to which of the two duties was more important and conducive to the true good—waging a righteous war against the unjust and wicked; or the protection of one's family (or at any rate its non-destruction with one's own hands). Affection as such was not directly an element in that conflict in his mind.

Misdeeds of the Kauravas.

Let those who contend that Arjuna's refusal for that war was due to family attachment consider carefully his desperate words in verse I/46. The noblest example of such affection is that of the mother's love. But to what extent would even she suffer for her child? Let us, however, grant here the extreme possibility of the protection of one's relations even at the sacrifice of one's life. But a personal affection of so intense a type, involving a total surrender of oneself, can be found only amongst the most near and dear relations. But every reader of the Mahābhārata knows full well that little love was lost between Arjuna and the Kauravas. Leave aside the dispute about the kingdom, wealth and the like; but what interest could Arjuna have retained in those whose wickedness had gone to the extent of attempting to undress his helpless wife Draupadi in an open assembly? The

Mahābhārata also clearly describes the myriad other acts of inhuman wickedness and utter injustice by the Kauravas—the attempt to poison Bhīma¹, the plot to ignite the house of lac in which the Pāṇḍavas were staying², the fraud in the game of dice³, and so on. Intoxicated with the ill-gotten wealth and riches, they had perpetrated so many atrocities, and had at last even arrayed themselves on the battle-field in defence of their evil actions.

However even keeping this consideration aside, let us assume for the sake of argument that due to affection Arjuna was still wishing long life and prosperity for the Kauravas. But, even if one feels for a relation so blind and inconsiderate affection, will he yet talk of having himself slain, without any fault of his own, by that relation and specially by so wicked a one? When Arjuna utters the words :

*yadi māmāpratikāram-
aśāstram śastrapāṇayah
dhātaraṣṭrā raṇe hanyus-
tanme kṣemataram bhavet. I/46.*

"(Even) if these sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, armed with weapons, were to slay me in an unarmed unresisting state on this battle-field, that should be better for me (rather than myself slaying them)", his mental attitude has little to do with worldly affection as such.

Family affection attributed to Arjuna.

And yet in his concluding remarks at the end of the first canto, Rāmānuja says : "Even though Arjuna, along with his brother-Paṇḍavās, had been repeatedly persecuted by the Kauravās in such atrocious murderous ways as (the setting fire to) the house of lac, and even though (he had nothing to worry as) he had the assistance of the greatest of men (Lord Kṛṣṇa), nevertheless that noble-minded, extremely kind-hearted, very affectionate towards relations, and thoroughly

1. *Mahābhārata, Ādi-Parva*, Chapter 128.
2. *Ibid*, Chapters 141-156.
3. *Mahābhārata, Sabhā Parva*.

But even this contention is hardly tenable. It is necessary in this connection to carefully go through a number of verses from I/20 onwards. With the sounding of conch shells on both sides Arjuna cast a glance over the Kaurava brothers standing in battle array in front of him, and raised his mighty bow (I/20). Thereafter he asked Kṛṣṇa to take his chariot betwixt the two forces (21); he desired to cast a glance at those with whom he was to fight on that field, those gathered there to wage the war by the side of 'the wicked Duryodhana' (22, 23). Thereupon Kṛṣṇa placed the chariot between the two armies (24); and asked Arjuna to behold those members of his own Kuru family assembled there for war (25).

It is clear that so far Arjuna was thinking only of the kinsmen on the opposite side. However, what met his sight at that moment (says the Gītā) consisted mainly of kinsmen and kinsmen 'amidst both the armies' (26, 27). Seeing 'all those brethren' Arjuna was overwhelmed by great pity¹ and dejection, and said 'at the sight of these kinsmen assembled here for war, my body trembles, the hair stand on end, and the skin feels a burning sensation' (28, 29, 30). Now, whom does the expression 'these kinsmen assembled here for battle' in verse 28 refer to? Can it be taken to mean the kinsmen on both the sides? It would however be more correct to interpret it as 'these kinsmen on the Kaurava side assembled for fighting against us.' One reason for this is that the expression *svajanam* (kinsmen) occurs here for the first time, and wherever it has been repeated by Arjuna (I/31, 37, 45) it has a reference to the kinsmen on the other side. From the very start he was desirous of casting a last-minute glance not over the kinsmen on his own side, but those on the opposite side assembled in support of Duryodhana.

But, it may yet be asked, what could be the sense behind the words 'seeing all those brethren amidst both the armies', occurring in verses 26 and 27? This point can thus be clarified. Seeing on both the sides kinsmen arrayed against each other, Arjuna thought that just as that war was

1. For a clarification of this 'pity' see the next chapter.

a family war personally for himself, so was it also for the others on his side. Had Arjuna seen kinsmen on the enemy side only, and non-relations on his own side, he could have said that the war was sinful only for himself, but not for the others on his side. He, however, saw a blood relationship of the enemy with the others on his side as with himself; and therefore arrived at the idea that a retirement from that war was proper not only for himself but also for the other chief warriors on his side. It is from this point of view that he uses the first person plural form, and not the singular, in verses 36, 37, 39 and 45. A look at it will show that he was thinking of the relations on his side along with himself, including in the said expression *svajanam* only the kinsmen on the other side.

Opening expression of the 'moha'.

Let us now pass on to the verse:

*numittāni ca paśyāmi
viparītāni keśava
na ca śreyo'nupāśyāmi
hatvā svajanamāhave.* I/31.

"Kṛṣṇa, I see (in connection with the ensuing battle) evil indications (omens, consequences). I fail to see any true good out of the killing of one's own kinsmen in this war." Till this verse Arjuna had only described the state of utter confusion that had arisen within him all of a sudden on that battlefield. But it is here that for the first time he starts to unburden his mind about the precise idea which was causing that bewilderment. From this point of view this verse is verily the entrance gate to the elucidation of his *moha*. He says herein that he visualised no good from the killing of kinsmen in that war. Which kinsmen was he going to fight against? There was no question of his slaying those on his own side. He may be regarding their death in that war as a probability; but that was not the cause of his desertion of duty at that moment. His primary concern was about the killing of kinsmen at his own hands. We have already

seen above how in order to express that concern of his the Gītā has repeatedly used the verbal root *han* ('to kill') right from this opening of the ethical problem till the end.

It may perhaps be urged that Arjuna was referring to 'killing' in a broad sense so as to include both the direct as also the indirect type of it. The kinsmen on the opposite side were of course going to be slain directly by him; but may it not be his idea that since even those on his own side were going to be slain in that war for the sake of the Pāṇḍavas, the responsibility for that too would ultimately rest on them? But Arjuna himself has made clear at several places those kinsmen the idea of whose being killed was agitating his mind at that time: "What good shall we achieve, Kṛṣṇa, by slaying these *sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra*? Nothing but sin shall accrue to us as a result of killing these worst criminals though they are." (1/36). "Therefore it will not be proper for us to slay these *sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra* as also the other brethren of ours (arrayed here against us). For how can we be happy, Kṛṣṇa, after having slain our own kinsmen?" (37). "It would be good even to fill the belly in this world with alms obtained by begging instead of slaying these *venerable elders*! By slaying these elders, *who have turned slaves of wealth*, we would be securing only bloodstained pleasures, and that too in this life alone (with no good whatever in the life hereafter)" (II/5). "These *sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra* after slaying whom we would not desire (even) to live, are themselves here arrayed against us (for war.)" (II/6). It is clear from these observations that the killing about which he was chiefly worried at the time was that of the enemy by himself and his side. It need not be insisted that the idea of the probable death of those on his side was in no way present in his mind at that moment¹. But his utter bewilderment along with the refusal for that war was not the outcome of that.

1. Perhaps the idea of some such possibility may have occasioned Kṛṣṇa's following general observations in verse II/30: "Since this self, that dwells in the body of every one, is ever incapable of being slain, you should not grieve for any being." Later during the vision of the Cosmic Reality also, Arjuna saw the kinsmen on his own side too entering the jaws of Death along with those on the enemy side (vide verse XI/26).

Arjuna does not refer to his own side.

The term *svajanam* in verse I/31 thus refers to the kinsmen on the opposite side. Having expressed in verse 32 the aversion to worldly enjoyments (that had temporarily and conditionally sprung up within him), Arjuna clarifies its cause from verse 33 onwards. A detailed interpretation of verse 32 has already been provided above. The words *yeṣāṃ arthe* ('for whom') in verse 33 are also related to the opposite side only; the details being clarified in the next i.e. thirtyfourth verse. It is sometimes urged that the kinsmen on the Pāṇḍava side are also included within the scope of these two verses. The present writer is unable to agree with that view. For, those mentioned in these two verses are the same persons addressed as *etān* ('these') at the beginning of verse 35: "These I do not desire to kill, even at the risk of myself being killed; and that not even for the sake of a mastery over the three worlds (heaven, earth and the underworld); what then to speak of the (mere) earth!" The 'These' in this verse are none but those referred in verse 33 as *yeṣāṃ* and specified in details in verse 34. Arjuna says "I do not desire to kill these". Obviously, therefore, 'these' persons are the kinsmen on the opposite side. As already said above the words 'These I do not desire to kill' cannot be interpreted to mean 'I do not desire to have these kinsmen on both the sides slain in this war'. Besides, there are separate expressions in Sanskrit for 'slaying' and 'causing to be slain'.¹

Coming to verse 36, we find that therein Arjuna mentions without any vagueness, and along with the qualification 'worst criminals' (*ātāyinaḥ*), the 'Dhārtarāṣṭrās' (i.e. Duryodhan and the other Kauravas); thus making plain that it was the sin of their being killed which was agitating his mind. That qualification makes it still clearer that the kinsmen mentioned from verse 31 onwards are those on the opposite side and not on Arjuna's own. Even verse 37 again mentions the 'Dhārtarāṣṭrās' and contains one more expression *svabāṇdhavān* ('our brethren'); which should be taken as quali-

1. See e.g. verse II/21 in the Gītā itself, where the verb *han*ti is used for slaying, and *ghātayati* for causing to be slain.

fying the noun *Dhātārāṣṭrān* or as referring to the remaining kinsmen on the enemy side besides the actual sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra. Both of them have been collectively referred to as *ete* ('these') in verse 38. If the 'brethren' in verse 37 are supposed to include those on Arjuna's own side also, they would likewise be included in the scope of the 'these' in verse 38 too. But a comparison of verses 38 and 39 would show that Arjuna is distinguishing between *ete* ('these') and *asmābhiḥ* (by us—'we'); and says that while 'these' have been blinded by greed, 'we' ought to be conscious of the sin involved in this war. Here he includes the kinsmen on his own side in the latter expression along with himself, and is addressing those on the opposite side as 'these'. In verse 39 he says that at least 'we' on the Pāṇḍava side ought to retire from the war.

Verses 40 to 44 contain an account of the evils of family-destruction. Looking at verse 45 in all this context it should be clear that the word *sugānam* (kinsmen) therein has a reference only to the Kaurava side, and that those on his own side have been included in *vayam* ('we') in its first line. Verse 46 has already been considered above.

In the opening portion of the second canto, while particularly clarifying his heart's agony Arjuna has specifically named such of the other side as Bhīṣma and Droṇa. Verse 6 of that canto again shows that the killing over which he was grieving was of those on the Kaurava side. The great upsurge of uncontrollable grief caused in his heart by the idea of the sin in that killing has been described in the eighth verse. It is followed by two verses of Sañjaya himself, and thereafter from verse II/11 there commences the great Gītā discourse.

Proof for the same in the expressions of Kṛṣṇa.

There is one more point to show that Arjuna's dejection and bewilderment were principally concerned with the killing of the enemy side. See the following concluding remarks of Lord Kṛṣṇa in the eleventh canto after the Vision of the Cosmic Reality: "Therefore arise, obtain glory, and vanquishing the foes enjoy a prosperous kingdom. These

have been already slain by myself; you now play the part, Arjuna, of its mere outward occasion (instrumental cause)." (XI/33). "Droṇa, Bhīṣma, Jayadrath, Karna, and so also the other warriors have been already slain (i. e. have their death decreed) by me. You slay them without hesitation; do not feel distressed (by the fear of sin); wage this war; you will conquer the enemy on the field" (34). Though Arjuna himself had witnessed not only the kinsmen on the opposite side but even those on his own entering the mouth of the Cosmic God-head (vide XI/26), the Lord nevertheless mentions only the former in expressing the message of the Cosmic Vision. In the first of the above verses Arjuna has been asked to 'arise, obtain glory, and vanquish the foes'; and has been further assured: 'These (enemies) have been already slain by me, and all that you are now to do is to act as its mere outward occasion'. In the next verse those on the enemy side—and they alone—have been specifically named; and Arjuna has again been told that they having been already slain by the Lord, there was no reason for him to feel distressed on that account. Had Arjuna's dejection been for those on his own side (or being for the enemy, had it been merely the outcome of personal affection), it would not have been removed by the mere assurance "these have been already slain by myself; you now play the part of its mere outward occasion (XI/33)". On the contrary, seeing their death certain, that grief would have been all the more intensified. Actually, however, the concern of Arjuna, removed by the direction 'Do not feel distressed', was for nothing else than the sin likely to accrue from the killing of the kinsmen at his own hands. With this in mind, the above verses can be properly interpreted.¹

1. Sankara's clarification of *mā vyathis/hāh* is however hardly acceptable. He sees therein Kṛṣṇa's removal of Arjuna's fear about being able to slay such brave warriors as Bhīṣma, Droṇa, and the like. And amplifying this interpretation Madhusudana writes: "where is the exertion in killing those that are already slain? Therefore do not feel distressed i. e. do not feel worried by the fear as to how you will be able to do it. Quit all such fear and wage the war." These observations are hardly fair to the brave Arjuna. They paint him as literally and physically a coward. Actually he had no doubt about his ability to vanquish Bhīṣma and Droṇa not to speak of the other warriors. He was confident that if he

Not 'when dead', but 'When slain by us'.

Before closing this topic, however, it will be worth considering the following two verses, which may probably appear to lend support to the misunderstanding that Arjuna's refusal for that war was based on personal affection :

yeṣamarthe kāṅkṣitam no

rāḡyam bhogāḥ sukhāni ca

ta ime'vāsthitā yuddhe

prāṇāṁśtyaktvā dhanāni ca. 1/33

and

...yāneva hatvā na jīvīṣāmas-

te'vasthitāḥ pramukhe dhātaraṣṭrah. II/6

The latter of these verses does not need any detailed discussion at this stage. It contains the clear expression *hatvā* ('having slain'), and means "After slaying whom (with our own hands) we would not desire (even) to live." It does not say that Arjuna was going to lose all interest in life, even if instead of being slain by him in that war those kinsmen were to die in some other manner. He was chiefly nervous about the sin accruing from their being killed at his hands. Having himself slain them for the sake of his own enjoyments, how was he to move about with those sinful hands of his ? What Arjuna was worrying at that time, the great poet Shakespeare has expressed in the following words of Macbeth after the latter had slain King Duncan with his own hands out of greed for the throne :

But wherefore could I not pronounce 'Amen' ?

I had most need of blessing, and 'Amen'

stuck in my throat.....

Methought I heard a voice 'sleep no more !

Macbeth does murder sleep'.....

waged the war their death was certain. It was therefore that he said it was good even to beg alms but not to slay them (II/5). In II/4 he objects to attacking Bhīṣma and Droṇa, not because he thought them too powerful, but because they were 'venerable i.e. deserving to be worshipped.'

Still it cried 'sleep no more !' to all the house.

What hands are here ? Ha !

They pluck out of mine eyes

Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood

Clean from my hand ? No ;

This my hand will rather

The multitudinous seas incarnadine,

Making the green one red.

(Act II Scene I)

Macbeth's grief was due not to personal affection for Duncan, but to the fear of sin consequent upon his murder of the king. He lost his sleep, was unable even to pray God, and felt that the blot on his hands was irremovable by anything. The fear of sin mercilessly followed him wherever he went. It is with reference to such a state that Arjuna also utters from the very bottom of his agonising heart : "How can we be happy, Kṛṣṇa, after having slain our own kinsmen ?" (I/37); "After slaying whom we would not desire (even) to live" (II-6).

Verse I/33 : meaning of 'yeṣāmarthe'.

Let us now turn to verse I/33. It is usually taken to mean 'those for whom, i.e. for whose sake, we desire kingdom, enjoyments and pleasures are themselves standing in battle array (against us) forsaking their lives and riches'. But as shown earlier in this chapter Arjuna is here referring to the kinsmen on the opposite side, and not those on his own.¹ And very likely these enemy kinsmen here do not include the leading Kaurava brothers themselves, who are mentioned separately in verse 36. Further, the present observations of Arjuna cannot possibly mean that he and the Pāṇḍavas had no desire for the kingdom and the like for themselves, and that their only inner wish was that the same should be ultimately passed on to the said kinsmen (denoted by *yeṣām*) for their sole enjoyment. Therefore, the current interpretations

1. The words *putrāḥ* (sons) and *patrāḥ* (grandsons) in verse 34 do not necessarily mean Arjuna's real sons and the like standing on his own side. These terms are also used to denote those on the opposite side whose age and family status deserved this appellation from the Pāṇḍavas. See, e.g. *Udyoga-Parva*, 30/22.

of *yeśāmarthe* as meaning literally 'for whose sake' do not appear quite correct.

Another interpretation is suggested by some writers in this connection. While admitting that the conquered kingdom was to be retained by the Pāṇḍavas for themselves, it is pointed out that they would have derived real pleasure from it only in enjoying it along with those kinsmen, without which all charm in it would have been lost. On this interpretation *arthe* would mean 'due to'; the line being thus rendered: "These kinsmen for i.e. due to whom we would feel the kingdom, enjoyments and pleasures as desirable; that is to say, only if they are our partners—co-sharers, co-enjoyers—would we enjoy all that, which otherwise would lose all charm and attraction for us." Thus explains Sankara: "Without them what shall I do with the kingdom and enjoyments?"¹ and Madhusūdana adds: "The kingdom and the like are not desired for solitary enjoyment. Those kinsmen due to whom it is desired...."

But even such an interpretation does not bring out the real sense in Arjuna's mind. It paints Arjuna as one worried about the charm in his enjoyments, and feeling that the absence of those kinsmen would affect the intensity of his pleasures. On the other hand if one carefully goes through the entire utterance of Arjuna on this point, along with the very clear opening remark "I fail to see any true good out of the killing of one's own kinsmen in this war" (I/31), it will be seen that he is not thinking primarily of his enjoyments as such, or the degree and intensity thereof, but of his duty towards his family. It was the apprehension that he was on the brink of committing a very grave sin and turning away from the true good, that so completely stirred his body, mind and soul at that moment.

Arjuna was looking at the situation principally from the point of view that those arrayed in front of him were his family-members and kinsmen, and that therefore whatever his personal relations with them—affectionate, hateful or indifferent—he owed a special duty to them. In the present

¹. *tairvinābhataḥ kim kariṣāmi rajayaukḥādineti*, commentary on II/11.

verse he is analysing his desire for the kingdom and the like, which had dragged him to that field. Confronted by the impending grave sin of family destruction, he wonders as to why and at what cost after all should those worldly objects be desired. Entering the non-egoistic frame of mind, he asks whether it is proper to desire the kingdom and the worldly objects solely for personal enjoyments; or rather is it not proper to also associate with that desire the idea of one's duty to his family, the promotion of its well-being and prosperity, its protection and assistance? The question of his personal affection or otherwise for any of its members was irrelevant in this context. He is rather emphasising his sense of duty towards them. Look, for example, to the expression *pūjārtau* ('deserving to be worshipped') applied by him to *Bhīṣma* and *Droṇa* in verse II/4. It indicates that in view of their age and status, as also their previous associations with him, it was his duty to respect and serve them, not to strike arrows at them in war; though in view of their supporting the unjust Kauravas he describes them in the same breath as *arthakāmān* ('slaves of wealth'). The fact was that he was mainly unnerved by the fear of acting as a great sinner who destroys his own family (*kulaghṇa* I/42, 43).

Therefore Arjuna is not here emphasising any personal affection, love or attachment on his part for the kinsmen denoted by *yeśām*; though he has not expressed any special aversion for them either, as he has unmistakably done with reference to the actual Kaurava brothers by calling them 'worst criminals' and the like. He had no particular enmity with these other kinsmen. He should have been happy to be on good terms with them, to be of service to them, to work in cooperation with them for the prosperity and wellbeing of the family as a whole. But the ill luck was that instead he found himself faced by them in a mortal combat that would have necessarily resulted in a mutual family destruction. In these circumstances what was his duty towards the family as a whole? Those on the opposite side had turned blind to their duty in this respect; should the Pāṇḍavas also do the same (I/38, 39)?

In the light of all this the expression *arthe* may better be

taken to mean, not literally 'for the sake of' or 'for the enjoyment of', but rather 'for the service or welfare of'; and *yesamarthe* can thus mean 'for whose service or welfare'. Arjuna had said in the thirtysecond verse, "I no more desire any victory, throne and pleasures (on condition of slaying my own kinsmen in this war)..." He clarifies it in the present verse by adding: "Those for whom (to be able to serve whom, to promote whose welfare) we should be desiring the kingdom and enjoyments are themselves standing in battle array (against us) forsaking their lives and riches." This indicates primarily Arjuna's concern for the duty of family service. While it was his duty to protect those kinsmen against others and to assist them generally, how could he himself stand against them instead in the war? The fencing is to protect the farm, not itself to devour it up. It should be noted that this reference to the kinsmen has been rounded up by the clear remark in verse 35: "These I do not desire to kill even at the risk of myself being killed". And the reason for that refusal is stated to be that any such act would result in the sinful family destruction with all its attendant evils. Plainly, the sincere anxiety of Arjuna was in the main that he may not be guilty of failing in his duty towards his family.¹

Special mention of the Kaurava brothers.

We have so far discussed the thirtythird verse in details. Very likely the Kaurava brothers themselves are not included within its scope. That means in their case Arjuna was not prepared to associate them in any manner with his desire for the kingdom and enjoyments. Considering their previous conduct little wonder need be felt for it. He mentions them separately in verse 36 along with the qualification 'worst criminals'; further describing them in verse 38 as 'those with their hearts corrupted by greed'. There is thus no room for assuming a sense of affection behind Arjuna's refusal to fight against at least the actual Kaurava brothers. Based on the

1. It may be noted that though not in rendering the present verse, nevertheless while referring to another verse in the Mahābhārata Tilak interprets *arthe* as meaning 'for proper protection' and not 'for enjoyment' (vide his book, chapter XII para 12).

ethical idea of sin, that refusal was the outcome of the intellectual bewilderment regarding his duty to the family.¹ Thus referring first to the other enemy kinsmen, and then specifically to the Kaurava brothers themselves, Arjuna refers to both of them collectively in verse 37: "Therefore it will not be proper for us to slay these sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra as also the other brethren of ours (arrayed here against us). For, how can we be happy, Kṛṣṇa, after having slain our own kinsmen?" The opening word 'therefore' in this verse has a reference to the previous argument, and conveys the sense 'Because we belong to the same family and since a war against one's own kinsmen is not conducive to the true good'. *Confusion between the ethical idea of sin and personal affection.*

Śankara, while discussing the causes and nature of Arjuna's dejection and *moha*, says in the introductory part of his commentary "Thus, through his expressions such as 'How shall I aim arrows on the field of battle at Bhīṣma and Droṇa?' (II/4) etc., Arjuna manifested his grief and *moha* which were born of affection, bereavement etc., caused by the idea that the kingdom, preceptors, sons (youngsters), friends, companions, relations, and family members were his and he was theirs."² Herein Śankara, seems to point exclusively to the alleged affection of Arjuna for Bhīṣma, Droṇa and the Kauravās.³ Better than this is Rāmānuja's mention of the concern about the good and evil at least as one of the causes. In the above observations of Śankara there appears no mention of the fear of sin which in fact was at the root of Arjuna's dejection and bewilderment. Not only this, he further adds⁴ that Arjuna's withdrawal from the duty was just on a par with the egoistic fruit-seeking desertion

1. In reply to Sanjaya before the war, Yudhiṣṭhira plainly says that it was in fact just to avoid a war against the family members that the Pāṇḍavas had patiently borne till then all the humiliations and atrocities. See *Mahābhārata Udyoga-Parva*, 31/12-16.

2. *tathā hyarjuna rājyagruhānām itrasulkrājanasambandhībādhavesu ahaṁ eṣāṁ mama ete īyevānpratyayam itasnehaśchedānimitau ātmanaḥ śokamohau pradārśtau 'katham bhīṣmamaham saṅkhye' ityāthā.*

3. Śankara has again suggested in his commentary on II/35 that Arjuna's refusal to that war was in fact based on the feeling of sympathy and affection.

4. *tathā ca sarvaḥprāṇānāṁ śokamohādūḥāstatoctasāṁ svabhāta eva svadharmaparitṛyāgāḥ pratiśiddhas. ca ca gṛhāt. śadharṇe pravrītānāpī teṣāṁ vāimānaḥkṛyādīnāṁ pravṛtīb phalābhisaṅdhipurikaiva sāhankāṁ ca bhavati.*

of the common man. We have however already clarified the important difference between the common egoistic *moha* of the ordinary man and the extraordinary non-egoistic nature of Arjuna's *moha*. The fact was that Arjuna's mind was caught between the fears of two great sins—that of the abandonment of the righteous war, which it was his duty to fight, and on the other hand that of family destruction. But both these were intellectual ideas pertaining to the sphere of morality. Arjuna's mind was whirling in the conflict between the two duties. That is why he was caught in a 'moral dilemma' (vide verse II/7). Duty versus personal attachment is no real ethical problem. The real ethical dilemma is a conflict between two fundamental duties as such. Arjuna was experiencing a real bewilderment as to what his duty was at the time; and was prepared to perform it, whatever it was, as soon as he definitely learnt it.

Looking to the importance of the point it will be better to adduce here, even at the cost of some repetition, one more illustration to distinguish the intellectual ideas of duty and sin from personal attachment and affection. Suppose a person gives a promise to his dying friend to always help the latter's son. Later, the person becomes a jailor; and it so happens that the son of that friend is sentenced in a criminal case and brought to the same jail to undergo imprisonment. The criminal then reminds the jailor of his promise to the dying friend, and seeks his help in an illegal escape from there! The person may or may not have any personal affection and attachment as such for the vagabond boy. Nevertheless, a problem arises in his mind as to whether he should follow his duty as a jailor and keep the prisoner in proper custody, or in pursuance of the sacred promise to a dying friend should help the son in an illegal escape from the prison. Whatever alternative is chosen, he feels worried about violating the other duty. This is a real 'ethical dilemma'. Arjuna's mental state in being caught between the frying pan and the fire was of this type! He had been hearing that causing family destruction is a sin; and he also knew that the abandonment of a righteous war is a sin. He was caught between the ideas of these two sins; and therefore

sundered himself to his friend, philosopher and guide to have this ethical riddle solved.¹

1. Here is an amazingly apt analogy from the world classic *Les Misérables* by Victor Hugo. Colonel Pontmercy, when mortally wounded on the battlefield, had his life saved by a curious accident due to the act of one Thernardier. Later, the colonel wanted to repay his debt of gratitude, but could not trace Thernardier. Finally on his deathbed he asked his son Marius to find out Thernardier and do every thing possible for him. Marius too failed to trace him in spite of an extensive search. One day Marius noticed in a room adjoining his own that a bandit named Jondrette was about to murder M. Leblanc, a pious gentleman, unless a big sum was paid. Marius was witnessing the whole incident through a hole in the wall, with his pistol ready to fire if necessary at the bandit at the last moment. However in the meantime the bandit (while threatening his victim) declared that he was in fact Thernardier and had saved the life of Colonel Pontmercy. These words suddenly shocked Marius out of his wits! Here was the very man whom his dying father wanted to be helped in all possible ways; and he was instead aiming a pistol at him! But at the same time, what about an innocent man being brutally murdered before his very eyes? His mind was utterly bewildered as that of Arjuna. The entire 79th chapter of the novel (English translation, Collins Press, London) deserves to be read in this connection. Here are a few extracts (with comparisons from the Gita). As soon as he heard the bandit revealing his identity, "Marius trembled in all his limbs (cp. *śānti māna gātrāni*—I/29), and he lent against the wall (cp. *rathopastha ubāṣat*—I/47); as if he felt a cold sword blade thrust through his heart. Then his right hand, raised in readiness to fire, slowly dropped.....Marius, relaxing fingers almost let the pistol fall (cp. *gāḍhām svavate hastāt*—I/30).....What! this man was Thernardier, the landlord of Montfermeil, whom he had so long and so vainly sought!.....This man, to whom Marius burned to devote himself; was a monster!.....What a bitter mockery of fate? (cp. I/33).....at the very moment when he was about to deliver over to justice a brigand in the act of crime, destiny cried to him, 'It is Thernardier!' (cp. *pārthā payaitān samaretān kurūhi*—I/25); and he was at length about to requite this man, for saving his father's life amid a hailstorm of grapeshot on the heroic field of Waterloo, by sending him to the scaffold! (cp. *aho bāta mahatpāpam kartum iyaśasitā vayan*—I/45). But on the other hand, how could he witness a murder, and not prevent it?.....Could he be bound by any ties of gratitude to such a villain (cp. *etān ālatāyinaḥ*—I/36).....There was remorse on either side. What should he do? Which should he choose? (cp. *na caitadidmah kataranno gariyo yadvā jayema yadi vā no manah*—I/30). He felt as if he were going mad (cp. *na ca śaknomyavasthātum*—I/30). His knees gave way under him (cp. *na ca śaknomyavasthātum*—I/30).....For about an hour he had heard two voices in his conscience, one telling him to respect his father's will, while the other cried to him to succour the prisoner. These two voices continued their struggle uninterruptedly, and caused him an agony (cp. *dhamasamudhachetāḥ*—II/7; also II/8). He had vaguely hoped up to this moment to find some mode of reconciling these two duties....." Could it be said here that Marius was moved by any egoistic attachment or personal affection for Thernardier? It was a clear case of an intellectual confusion caused by the conflict of two compelling duties. Basically the same was the psychology of Arjuna.

be reasonably maintained that the opening objection of such a person was based on a feeling of compassion?

'*Kārpunya*' does not mean compassion.

Those who think that Arjuna's opposition to that war was due to compassion probably rely on two words in particular: *kṛpā* and *kārpunya*. In his account of Arjuna's plight Sañjaya twice uses the former word:

kṛpayā parayāviṣṭo
viśīdanmīdamabravītI/28
tam tathā kṛpayāviṣṭam-
aśrupīrṇakulekṣaṇam
viśīdantamidaṁ vākyam-
uvāca madhusūdanaḥ. II/1

"Overwhelmed by extreme pity (*kṛpā*) and dejection Arjuna said thus. I/28. To Arjuna, thus overwhelmed by pity (*kṛpā*), with eyes full of tears and deeply dejected, Kṛṣṇa replied thus II/1." And once Arjuna himself uses the latter word:

kārpayadoṣopahatasvabhāvaḥ
prcchāmi tvām dharmasammūḍhacētāḥ. ...II/7

"My mind (reason) having been overwhelmed by poorness of spirit, I feel quite bewildered about my duty (or, about the right and the wrong) at this time; I therefore seek your guidance."

Out of these two expressions, *kārpunya* seems on the whole to have caused less confusion. For, most writers rightly interpret it, not as kindness or compassion, but as 'weakness or faintness of the heart', 'poorness of the spirit'. What Arjuna means is not that his heart was at the moment overwhelmed by compassion or mercy as such, but that his reason had lost the normal capacity of discriminating between the good and the bad, his heart was trembling with the fear of sin, and that therefore his mind was caught in the

CHAPTER VIII

FURTHER DISCUSSION OF ARJUNA'S DEJECTION AND 'MOHA'

Arjuna's 'moha' was not born of universal kindness.

Just as some writers charge that the extraordinary confusion about duty created in the mind of Arjuna at the commencement of that righteous war was born of affection for kinsmen in the worldly sense, others are seen to urge that his refusal for that war was based on the broad stand of universal kindness. They maintain that Arjuna was seeking to retire from that war under the influence of mercy and pity, and that Kṛṣṇa warned him that such a feeling of mercy did not become a warrior on the battle-field.

But it is wrong to urge that Arjuna was opposing all wars as such, and maintain that like Buddha and Aśoka a feeling of universal kindness was aroused in his mind at the moment. It was only a war against his kinsmen that Arjuna was objecting to;¹ and that too particularly for the sake of his kingdom. One who feels compassion for another would not be ready to cause suffering to him for any reason; and if at all it becomes inevitable he would do it in a most unwilling manner. Arjuna's objection was that the war against kinsmen would land him into sin. But what could be his grievance if that war was not going to result in any such thing? In that case, he was wholeheartedly prepared to wage it without any concern for pain or suffering being caused to them. Seeing that such was his stand, it can hardly be maintained that in his opening objection to that war his heart was moved by anything like compassion as such. Suppose a hunter when asked to shoot a deer at first refuses to do it for fear of royal wrath. But on being assured that the person asking him to do so was the king himself, and that by hunting the game he would not be liable to any punishment, he does so with enthusiasm. How could it

¹ "It is not so much slaughter but slaughter of one's own people that causes distress and anxiety to Arjuna"—Radhakrishnan, *op. cit.*, p 89.

whirlpool of doubt regarding his duty at the moment. That word is an abstract noun derived from the word *kṛpā* which occurs in the Gītā itself in the observation "They are *kṛpāṇa* (of low nature) who are prompted (to action) by the motive of the 'fruit' (i.e. personal consequences)" (II/49). There it indicates not a man with compassion, but one of an inferior egoistic nature. There is also an observation in the Upaniṣads that defines a *kṛpāṇa* person as 'one who departs from this world without realising the knowledge of the eternal *Brahman*'.¹ In this sense *kāṛpāṇya* is directly connected not with compassion but with lack of true knowledge. Arjuna too means something similar. Regarding himself in a wretched plight at that moment, he felt that his normal intellect had ceased to function amidst a state of grave confusion as to the right and wrong, the good and bad.

Peculiar nature of Arjuna's 'kṛpā.'

But there still remains the word *kṛpā* twice used by Sañjaya. The plain meaning of this word is no doubt pity. Sañjaya says that Arjuna was overwhelmed by extreme pity. But it is necessary to consider carefully for whom that pity was being felt. This word has also to be interpreted consistently with the expression *kāṛpāṇya-dōṣa* used by Arjuna himself. That pity contained the very quintessence of all the dejection caused by the idea as to what a heinous sin he was on the brink of perpetrating, how his reason had been confounded, and how at that moment on the very battle-field he was caught on the horns of a most tormenting dilemma compelling him either to abandon the righteous war or fight against his own kinsmen. In short, that pity was primarily for himself. 'Kṛṣṇa, I am unable to decide anything; if I wage this war I see grave sin in it, and even the contrary course does not appear quite faultless, my limbs quail, the mind is whirling, I resign myself unto you, guide me properly at this moment of supreme moral crisis'—such is the implication of Arjuna being overwhelmed by great 'pity' as that moment.

1. *yo vā etadakṣarānavāditvā smalokāṭhpraiti sa kṛpāṇaḥ.*—*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, III-8-10.

Indicating how that pity of Arjuna was distinct from the usual type of it, Aurobindo first describes the latter and then says: "But such is not the compassion which actuates Arjuna in the rejection of his work and mission. That is not compassion but an impotence full of a weak self-pity, a recoil from the mental suffering which his act must entail on himself... 'I see not what shall thrust from me the sorrow that dries up the senses'...and of all things self-pity is among the most ignoble and un-Aryan of moods."¹ As said in this quotation, that pity enveloping Arjuna's mind was one for himself, an indication of intellectual bewilderment absolutely un-Aryan.² It was this which Kṛṣṇa condemned as 'wretched un-heartedness' (II/3). That pity was not the outcome of personal affection or universal kindness.³ It was rather of the nature of a sense of shame or pity which one feels for himself, a lack of self-confidence, a feeling of utter helplessness, an attitude of self-condemnation.

Double application of some observations in the Gītā.

This clarification of Arjuna's feeling of pity throws necessary light on the nature of his grief too. Actually his grief was concerned with the fear of sin in the killing of his kinsmen by himself. However, the commencement of the discourse in the second canto appears at first sight to refer to the usual type of ordinary death, and the bereavement resulting from it. For example, see the following verses :

*avyaktiō'yamacintyō'yam-
avikāryo'yamucyate
tasmdēvaṁ viditvānaṁ
nānuśocitumarhasi. II/25*

*atha caināṁ nityajātāṁ
nityaṁ vā manyase mṛtaṁ
tathāpi tvāṁ mahābāho
nainaṁ śocitumarhasi. II/26*

1. *Essays on the Gītā*, First Series, p. 85.

2. Dr. Radhakrishnan too interprets *kṛpā* in the same manner.

3. Dhanapati explains *kṛpā* as *śnehaṇyakarūṇā* ('pity born of affection').

iātasyahi dhruvo mṛtyur-
dhruvaṁ janma mṛtasya ca
tasmādaparihārye'rthe
na taṁ śocitumarhasi. II/27
avyaktādīni bhūtāni
vyaktamādhyāni bhārata
avyaktānīdhamānyeva
tatra kā paridevanā. II/28

"This self is regarded as unmanifest, i.e. not perceivable by the senses, inconceivable, i.e. not cognisable by the mind and unchangeable. Therefore, knowing this nature of the self, you ought not to grieve—25. And if you hold that every time this self is born and dies (along with the birth and death of the body), even then, Oh Mighty-armed (Arjuna), you ought not to grieve over it—26. For (even so) whosoever is born is sure to die and whoever dies is certain to be (re-) born; therefore you ought not to grieve over what is but inevitable—27. All beings are unmanifest in their origin and destination, being manifest only in the intermediate (living) state (one does not know them before birth and after death, whence they come and where they go; they are only apparent so long as they exist in this world in a live state). It being so, why lament over that? —28".

Now, due to the general language of these verses they can and often are employed for consoling a man for the natural death of a kinsman. It is therefore often overlooked that in the Gītā, however, they are directly meant for the removal of a different type of grief in the mind of Arjuna. Thus, for example, Nilakantha explains *nānuśocitumarhasi* ('you ought not to grieve') in verse II/25 as "Do not grieve on account of the bereavement from your kinsmen."¹ But if we look at the clear expression *hatvā* used by Arjuna himself, and such previous observations of Kṛṣṇa also as "The self slays not, nor is slain" (II/19), "The self is not slain by the body being slain" (II/20), "How can the self-

1. *bandhuvyogajam śokam mā kāśṣṛityarthah.*

realised person slay any one or cause any one to be slain?" (II/21), it is plain that the direct reference in the above verses is to the fear of the sin of killing in Arjuna's mind, and not to the mere sorrow of natural bereavement as such. It is necessary to note that while the Gītā discourse contains a direct guidance to Arjuna for that particular occasion, with its masterly language it is also intended to serve as a guidance for humanity in general.¹ Many of its observations, therefore, can be extended beyond the specific circumstances of Arjuna, and also applied to other walks and situations in life. But that should not lead to an erroneous reading of the specific mental state of Arjuna himself. If a man suffers from cold and is advised that 'it is not proper to feel miserable for such an ailment; the wise do not feel dejected by the bodily diseases'; the latter half in this can obviously have a broader application. But it will be hardly proper to overlook that actually that man is suffering from only a particular ailment known as bronchitis.

Entrance gate to the Gītā gospel.

In this context, let us look here specially at the following observation of Kṛṣṇa just at the very commencement of his discourse :

asocyānauśocastvaṁ
prajñāvadāmsca bhāṣa se
gatāsūnagatāsuñśca
nānuśocanti pañḍitāḥ II/11

"You are grieving over those that deserve no grief, and yet are uttering seemingly wise talk. The truly wise grieve neither over the retention nor over the departure of life." Now, though the latter half of this verse in the nature of a maxim is broad enough to apply to all kinds of deaths,

1. To say so, however, is different from the view of the *sannyāsa* school that 'the Gītā advises the path of action to the ignorant Arjuna, while the contrary path of its renunciation to others'. When I say that some observations in the Gītā are liable to double application, all that is intended is that the scope of one of them is restricted as compared to that of the other, and not that the two interpretations are mutually opposed. The one is included in the other, there being no inconsistency between them.

the first half is directly concerned with the specific mental state of Arjuna. His mind was at that time worrying not about the common form of death but the one resulting in that war.

The latter half of this verse is usually rendered thus: "The wise, i.e. those who have fully realised self-knowledge grieve neither over the dead nor over the living". But the question is, what is the point in saying that the wise do not grieve over the living? When does even the common man do so? He usually grieves over the dead, and therefore it may be said that the wise do not do so. But what is the peculiarity in saying the same about the living?¹

Complaining that writers on the Gītā have altogether confounded the sense of the above line, Tilak says in his note on this verse, "This verse speaks of those who do not grieve over the departure or even the continuation of life. Out of that, the grief over its departure is but natural, and a direction not to do so is appropriate. But doubts having arisen as to the reason and manner of the grief over the continuation of life, the commentators have indulged in a lot of discussion over it; and some have urged that the continuation of the lives of fools and the ignorant is itself a matter of grief. But the whole problem would be solved if instead of such hairsplitting, the expression 'to grieve' (lament) is interpreted to mean 'to feel happy or unhappy' or 'to mind (care for)'. All that is intended here is that to the enlightened person both these things are alike." But how can the verb *anūśocanti* be even partly interpreted to mean 'feeling happy'? In the vocabulary of the Gītā there are available such expressions as *prahṛīyati*,² *abhinandati*,³ for feeling happy or delighted; and such others as *śocati*,⁴ *dveṣṭi*,⁵ *udvijet*,⁶ for feeling unhappy, miserable and the like. As a matter of fact, the verbal root *śuc* has been so often employed in the clear sense of grieving that there

1. All that Śāṅkara does here is to give a literal meaning of the words. Most of the others too add little more.

2. V/20; see also XI/36.

3. II/57.

4. XII/17, XVIII/54; see also XVI/5, XVIII/66.

5. II/57, V/3, XII/17, XIV/22, XVIII/10.

6. V/20; see also XII/15.

is hardly any room for any ambiguity on the point. Indeed, it has been so used in the first line of the present verse itself!

Grief for the dead and the living.

It does not therefore appear that the intention of the Gītā is to say that the wise man feels no happiness and unhappiness in any one's life and death respectively. It clearly states that the wise man *grieves* neither over the life nor again over the death; and one has to interpret this consistently. Now the point here is that sometimes the common man does feel grief even for the living state; and the wise is immune from that too. Such grief for life as well as death can take various forms. Either of these can be concerned with oneself or with others, and can be either egoistic or non-egoistic. Here is a brief account of some of its more important varieties.

Grief for death (*gatāsūn*):—Its egoistic variety is usually seen in the common man who grieves over his own contemplated death, and also over that of others due to worldly attachment and affection. The grief of the judge in Mr. Bhavé's parable would fall under this category.

On the other hand, its non-egoistic variety is found when someone's death being in fact morally justifiable, to cause it is nevertheless felt as sinful due to a confusion about the true nature of right and wrong. The grief of Arjuna at the commencement of the war, and of Yudhiṣṭhira at its conclusion, illustrate this type.

Grief for life (*agatāsūn*):—Its egoistic form is found in one who is tired of *his own* life and wants to end it due to bodily ailments, monetary loss, bereavement, humiliations and such other worldly suffering. Besides, one may also desire to end his own life due to the idea of having committed some grave sin. Such an idea of the sin may be a well-founded one as in the case of Macbeth, or baseless as with Arjuna and Yudhiṣṭhira. But in either case to seek the end of one's life on that account is wrong. If a sin has really been committed, one cannot escape its consequences merely by a forcible end of life; and if not, it is of course wrong to thus end it.

Now, a man grieves egoistically over another's life when he is unhappy over it due to personal hate, malice, greed, anger and the like. This is the attitude of the common murderer who seeks the end of his enemy's life. But a man may be said to grieve non-egoistically over another's life, when without reference to any personal interest he feels its continuance as undesirable due to an intellectual confusion about the right and wrong; and even at the risk of his own life works to bring about the death of that other. The non-egoistic and yet erroneous viewpoint of those perpetrating wrongful slaughters for political or religious causes in a fanatical mood would illustrate this last type.

It will be clear from the above how a man can be unhappy over the non-departed life too, as over the departed one. The person possessed of knowledge is free from both these varieties. He does not grieve if the death of anyone (himself or another) is inevitable in the pursuit of duty; and if it is not so, nor does he grieve due to his continuance. That is the sense of the latter half of the above verse. One should face death with an unsorrowful attitude where it is essential and inevitable in the pursuit of duty; and otherwise life ought to be accepted with the same attitude till death terminates it in the natural course.¹

The specific grief of Arjuna.

Lest us now turn to the first half of the above verse. As already said, the maxim about the wise person in the second line is of a wider application than the specific situation of Arjuna. The first half is clearly addressed to Arjuna alone; and it will be hardly proper to attribute to him all the forms of grief implied in the second. Only two of them are directly related to his mental state at the time. His grief for death concerned not himself but others; and was primarily the outcome of non-egoistic considerations. The killing of those wicked kinsmen at his own hands appeared to him a sinful and therefore lamentable event.

1. Vide *Mahābhārata*, Śāntiparva, 245/15: *nābhīmandeta maraṇāni, nābhīmandeta jīvitaṁ ; kālameva prapīksata, nīdāśmī bhṛtako yatiā*. "One should not rejoice over death, nor over life. Just as the servant awaits the master's directions, one should await the call of Time (with an unperturbed mind)."

On the other hand, his wish that he should not even continue to live after committing such a sinful act represents his grief for his 'non-departed life.' The latter has a clear reference to the following utterances of Arjuna: "After slaying our own kinsmen in this war, what shall we do with the kingdom or enjoyments or (for the matter of that even) life?—I/32. (Even) if these sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, armed with weapons, were to slay me in an unarmed unresisting state on this battlefield, that should be better for me (rather than myself slaying them) —I/46. These sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, after slaying whom *we would not desire (even) to live* are themselves here arrayed against us (for war):—II/6." It is the aversion of Arjuna for his own life (in case he were to wage that war) expressed in these verses that seems to have been disapproved by Kṛṣṇa through the expression *agatāśun* (the non-departed lives) in the above verse.

Such was the specific nature of Arjuna's grief for the living and for the dead. And yet this is how Śāṅkara explains this verse: "It is not proper (says the Lord to Arjuna) to grieve over Bhīṣma, Droṇa, etc.; for they are of virtuous conduct, and are besides eternal from the metaphysical point of view. And yet, for these who deserve no grief you are lamenting that 'they are going to die on my account, and what shall I do with the kingdom, enjoyments and the like without them?' "¹

The words "What shall I do without them?" are expressive of affection. But that is not what Arjuna means. He does not say that without those kinsmen he would necessarily feel the world empty and lose all interest in life. The principal ground of his grief was that with their killing at his own hands the burden of that sin would make life unbearable for him. One more point for objection against Śāṅkara's above observations is his elucidation of *asōcyān*, i.e. "those that deserve no grief". Once we take the stand that Arjuna's grief was merely for the bereavement due to

1. *asōcyānityādī. na sōcyā asōcyā bhīṣmadroṇādāyāḥ sadṛṣṭatātūlparamāṛthā-rūpeṇa ca nityatāt, itāśōcyānmasōco'mucītatācānāṁ te mṛjante mananīttencleṇa tairvīnābhūlāḥ kiṁ karisyāmi rājasukhādīnetai....."*

the death of those kinsmen, we are naturally led to interpret *aśocyān* as referring directly to the persons Bhīṣma, Droṇa, and the rest. But the question then arises as to why these persons are described as 'not deserving of grief'. In answer to this Śankara says that they (i.e. their death) deserved no grief because they were of virtuous conduct, and besides, metaphysically speaking they were eternal. Arjuna's grief, however, was not confined merely to the two 'virtuous' persons Bhīṣma and Droṇa, but extended to all the kinsmen on the opposite side including the Kaurava brothers themselves, whom a certificate of 'good conduct' could hardly be issued. Not only does Arjuna himself call them wicked criminals, but Kṛṣṇa's own opinion about them need not be taken to be different from it.¹ The very fact that he regarded that war a necessary righteous one for the Pāṇḍavas indicates his opinion about the Kauravas and also about Bhīṣma and Droṇa. And besides, if they are to be taken as good persons, their death would in fact deserve grief rather not otherwise. It is only by regarding them as evil, that there would be some justification for looking to it as 'not deserving of grief'!

'*Aśocyān*' refers directly to events, not persons.

Therefore it seems rather inappropriate to interpret the word *aśocyān* in the above verse as referring directly to any persons like Bhīṣma, Droṇa etc. Arjuna's grief was not primarily for these persons as such, i.e. their death and the consequent bereavement. That word seems to refer in the first place to the act of that war, and the killing inevitable therein. Arjuna was feeling grief because he found himself called upon to fight against Bhīṣma, Droṇa and the others. His whole anxiety was to avoid it. In view of this, the expression 'those that deserve no grief' in the above verse may better be interpreted as referring directly to 'things, acts or events', and indirectly to 'persons'. These

1. Vide Mahābhārata, Udyoga-Parva, chapter 29 verses 31 onwards, where Kṛṣṇa recounts the misdeeds of the Kauravas before Sañjaya who had come to dissuade the Pāṇḍavas from the fratricidal war. See the specific condemnation of Bhīṣma in verse 37 for his silence at the undressing of Draupadi.

things that deserved no grief consisted of the fighting against and slaying the wicked enemies in that righteous war, and the continuance of his own life after doing so. It is in elucidation of these unlamentable things that the latter half of the verse refers to the lives that have departed and those that have not, which has been already explained above. On this explanation of *aśocyān*, there arises no question of those enemies being of good conduct; indeed the more evil-minded they were the more unlamentable was a war against them, and so too the life of the person who waged it in the performance of duty. Besides this, there was also the second point that the pure self being from the metaphysical point of view eternal could not be slain. But this latter point must not be divorced from the first; otherwise, as expressed by Sri Mahadeo Desai, there may result the danger of an encouragement to murder (and suicide).¹

1. See *The Gītā According to Gandhi*, pp. 103-08. The point is further discussed in chapter XIV.

PART SECOND

The Gospel of Krsna

CHAPTER IX

GENESIS OF VOLUNTARY ACTION

We have examined at length in the First Part the real nature of the dejection and bewilderment of the great warrior Arjuna, with reference to which Lord Kṛṣṇa, master of *yoga*, related the Gītā discourse. The previous discussion has also indicated how Kṛṣṇa argued away that bewilderment of Arjuna, keeping in view the actual situation on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra. We have now to ascertain in the Second Part what universal principle of common application about the nature of ideal life has been expounded in the gospel of the Gītā as a whole. 'Fight at this time with these criminal kinsmen of yours' was the direction meant specifically for Arjuna on that particular occasion. But had its message been confined only to that, the Gītā discourse would have assumed only a historical or mythological significance. Arjuna on his part did what he was directed to do; and his life and career have long since disappeared in the endless stream of time. When the reader of today studies the Gītā, it is not merely for an acquaintance with the personal history of Arjuna, but to receive guidance in one's own life. Therefore, having first discussed the psychology of Arjuna, it behoves us to ascertain carefully what ethical guidance of universal application has been offered by the author of the Gītā.

Onesided emphasis on the non-egoistic aspect.

Though it is true that while explaining the ideal act the Gītā lays emphasis on the purity of the subjective attitude, that does not justify the idea of some writers that with such subjective attitude one need entertain no further consideration about the actual nature of the act. This point has already been touched to some extent in the First Part with

special reference to Arjuna; and it would be desirable to commence this Part with a restatement of the same. The Gītā does not maintain that such purity of the agent's subjective attitude is the sole criterion of the morality of action. It advocates that even when one's attitude is non-egoistic it is necessary to deliberate discriminatively as to which act is *kārya* (right) i.e. deserving of being done and which is *akārya* (wrong) i.e. deserving of being avoided. What is right for one or in a particular set of circumstances may not be so for another or in a different set of circumstances. But it would be hardly proper to deny therefore all distinction between the right and the wrong as such, and to say that the Gītā only recognises the distinction between the attachment and non-attachment for the 'fruit' of action, identifying the non-egoistic act with right and egoistic with the wrong. As a matter of fact, it draws a clear distinction between the right and the wrong, apart from that between the non-egoistic and the egoistic. Had Kṛṣṇa's view really been that the egoistic attachment for the 'fruit' is the only cause of immorality in action, and non-attachment for it the sole adequate standard of morality, why should he have insisted on Arjuna's performing at that moment that very war itself instead of doing anything else? In fact Arjuna himself raises that question in verse III/1, to which Kṛṣṇa has given a suitable reply too.

Right-wrong classification of acts.

The Gītā holds that even if an act is non-egoistic from the personal standpoint of the agent, that by itself would not completely determine its moral quality, it being also necessary to see whether it is right i.e. deserving of being performed from the wider objective standpoint. And it is with this sense that even after expounding the ideal state of equanimous reason at the end of the second canto, Kṛṣṇa not granting the liberty to do whatever one pleases, unambiguously enjoins the following direction to perform the "right" action :

tasmā dasaktah satatam

kāryaṁ karma samācara . . . III/19

"Therefore always perform, with an attitude of non-attachment, the *right* act". Again in the eighth verse in the same canto there occurs the direction "Do your duly fixed act (duty)". So also in the beginning of the sixth canto, while describing the ideal personality, the Gītā refers to the rightness of the act, apart from the personal non-attachment for its fruit, in the following words:

anāśritah karmaphalam

kāryam karma karoti yah . . . VI/1

"(He is the true *sanyāsī* and the *yogī* too) who performs the *right* act without any personal attachment for the action and its fruit." And lastly, in the eighteenth canto after mentioning such virtues as non-attachment and renunciation of the 'fruit' indicative of the subjective purity of the agent's reason, Kṛṣṇa observes : "Arjuna, that abandonment is deemed to be of the *sattva* category, wherein one performs the *duly fixed task* purely from a sense of duty, abandoning all attachment for the act and its 'fruit' " (XVIII/9).

These clear references to the propriety or rightness of the action in the Gītā will show the untenability of the one-sided subjective theory of the morality of action. The Gītā does not say that the only forbidden thing is the subjective attachment for the 'fruit' of action, and that once a man is free from it there remains no other rule of morality to follow. The Gītā does not believe that when a man's attitude is subjectively pure i.e. bereft of egoistic attachment—when he feels that it is so—any performance of a wrong act is impossible on his part; and therefore it is not prepared to let the man roam unrestrained in this intricate world of action. True, while concluding the Gītā discourse Kṛṣṇa observes:

iti te jñānamākyātām

guhyaḍguyataram mayā

vimīṣyaitadaśeṣeṇa

yatheccchasi tathā kuru. XVIII/63

"Thus have I disclosed to you this most secret knowledge. Reflect fully over it and act as you wish". However, the implication of the last clause ('act as you wish') is not 'Now there is no objection to your doing whatever you please; equipped with the non-egoistic attitude expounded by me, whatever you do will be but conducive to the true good'. The observation means: 'Now, you may do whatever you choose. It is not for me to compel you to any particular course of action. I have explained to you the paths of both the right and wrong. If you like, follow the wrong path or tread the path of your necessary duty'.

In Tilak's view Arjuna had at the outset become intent on pursuing beggary, abandoning that war. Tilak also says that the Gītā ethics visualises only two categories of action, the egoistic and the non-egoistic, and that the abandonment of the former and the performance of the latter is the central gist of the Gītā gospel¹. But if so, why did Kṛṣṇa after all object to Arjuna's alleged pursuit of beggary with a non-egoistic attitude? As already seen in the First Part, Arjuna's stand behind the opposition to that war was itself a non-egoistic one. But even those who differ from our view about the non-egoistic attitude of Arjuna can not escape from the present difficulty. Even if one holds that Arjuna's opposition to that war and alleged desire for contemplative life were based on egoistic considerations, the question remains as to why Kṛṣṇa did not agree to his pursuing even that course, only asking him first to make his mind thoroughly non-egoistic. Actually, we find that even after relating the full significance of the ideal stabilised reason including the *niṣkāma* attitude, he did not give up his insistence that it was obligatory for Arjuna at that time to perform the one specific act—"Therefore, Arjuna, wage this war" (II/18, II/37, III/30, IV/42, VIII/7, XI/34). Is it not clear from this that the Gītā classifies acts not only into the egoistic and non-egoistic, but also into the right and the wrong?²

1. See, *inter alia*, Tilak's comments on verse XVIII/2.

2. According to the English terminology, *niṣkāma* may be rendered as the 'formally right' and *kārya* as the 'materially right'. (See Sidgwick: *The Methods of Ethics* pp. 206-07). Some writers use the words 'subjective' and 'objective' in place of 'formal' and 'material'. Others draw a fine distinction even between these two forms of expression.

The distinction between the egoistic and the non-egoistic is related to the way or viewpoint of performing an act. On the other hand the *kārya-akārya* distinction, indicates the actual nature or content of the act. The ideal act is *niṣkāma* and also *kārya*. It is possible to perform a wrong act with the non-egoistic attitude; and a right act with the egoistic attitude. Had Arjuna abandoning the war really set out for a life of the recluse, it would have been an instance of the non-egoistic but wrong action; and so also the resort to jungle which Yudhiṣṭhira was contemplating, under the influence of dejection caused in his mind after the close of that very war, due to the idea of the sin involved in it¹. On the contrary, the action of those who fought in that war on the side of the Pāṇḍavas, but with the motive of personal enjoyments, ought to be classed as egoistic yet right. Kṛṣṇa himself advises Arjuna in verse II/37 such a type of action, though as a secondary alternative.

Defective definition of 'karma-yoga'?

It is worth noting how on account of a disregard of this double aspect of the ideal act according to the Gītā, and a concentration on only its non-egoistic character, Tilak's basic definition of *karma-yoga* itself suffers from being too narrow and inapplicable to the very character of Arjuna's dejection. He says in that definition: "The science of *karma-yoga*, or as briefly put by the Gītā the science of *yoga*, is that science (*śāstra*) by which one can decide such questions as: which of the several *yogas*, means or ways of performing one and the same act is the best and purest one; whether or not that way can be always followed; if not, what are the exceptions to that way and how they arise; why is that way good or bad which we think to be so; by whom and on what basis is such goodness or badness to be decided; or what is its secret, etc. The words 'good' and 'bad' are of common use; and in the same sense are

1. Vide, *Mahābhārata, Śaṅkha-parva*.

2. According to Tilak, the Gītā is 'the science of *karma-yoga* i.e. the *yoga* of action.' Action, incessant lifelong (non-egoistic) action, is the gist of the teaching of the Gītā according to him.

sometimes employed the words 'auspicious' and 'inauspicious', 'beneficial' and 'harmful', 'conducive to the true well being' and 'leading away from it', 'meritorious' and 'sinful', or 'righteous' and 'unrighteous'. The same is also the sense of the word-pairs *kārya* and *akārya*, 'duty' and 'non-duty', 'just' and 'unjust' ".¹

Now, the very opening of this definition will be found to be indicative of oneness. Which of the two ways or methods, the non-egoistic and egoistic, of performing *one* and *the same act* is the preferable one, and why;—that is but one problem of the Gītā ethics of action. But besides it, another important question is: where in the prevailing circumstances *more acts than one* are possible, which of them is to be chosen and why? This latter question is related to the above distinction between *kārya* and *akārya*; and the main problem of Arjuna was just of this type and not of the former. Is it that Arjuna was already sure about the propriety of that act of war, the problem before him being only whether to do it in this manner or that—with the non-egoistic attitude or the egoistic? Actually, Arjuna's objection was to the very act of that war. As Tilak himself believes, Arjuna was seeking to abandon that act and instead follow another viz beggary; but such a stand on the part of Arjuna does not fit in with the above definition of *karma-yoga*. Tilak's definition assumes a unanimity between the two parties as to the content of a specific act, with a divergence of views only about the manner of performing it. In the situation on the eve of the Gītā discourse, however, there was no such unanimity between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, and the latter was intensely opposing that very act of war which the former wanted him to perform. In short, the above definition of *karma-yoga* is one-sided and does not quite cover even the main problem of Arjuna in the Gītā, its aim being concentrated only on the distinction between the egoistic and non-egoistic attitudes. And yet, that definition has been rounded up at the end by the unwarranted remark that the said distinction itself means the classification into *kārya* and *akārya*, thereby making the confusion more confounded.

1. *Op. cit.* Chap. III para 6.

The Gītā itself treats the right-wrong classification as distinct from that into the egoistic and non-egoistic. But this naturally raises the question about the precise criterion of that classification. How is one to judge which act is right and which is wrong? However, before entering into the view of the Gītā in that respect it would be useful to deal with the psychological analysis of voluntary action. That background would help an adequate appreciation of this usually overlooked but important aspect of the ethics of the Gītā.

Action and environment.

It is well known that the expression *karma* (action) connotes diverse meanings. Sometimes the natural physiological processes of the body like breathing are also designated by that name. Thus, for instance, they are included in its connotation in the following verse :

na hi kaśचित्keśanamāpi
jātu tiṣṭhatyakarmakṛt
kāryate hyavaśaḥ karma
sarvaḥ prakṛtijairguṇaiḥ. III/5

"None passes even a moment without doing some action; all beings remain performing actions being goaded on by the qualities of *prakṛti*".¹ But besides these, the bodily movements made by a man out of his own will are also action, and constitute the type of voluntary acts. In the following verse in the same canto, as also at several other places in the Gītā, the word *karma* is employed in this latter sense;

yastvindriyāni manasā
niyanayārabhate'ryuna
karmendriyaiḥ karmayogam
asaktaḥ sa viśiṣyate. III/7

1. See also verse XVIII/11. Verses V/8, 9 also include these natural processes in the 'action.'

"Arjuna, he excels in eminence who controls the senses by his mind, and without attachment commences the path of action (*karma-yoga*) through the organs of action."

A voluntary act is performed with a certain aim in view. Whenever one feels any dissatisfaction about the existing situation he thinks of changing it; and when this thought takes root he attempts to act accordingly. This attempt is the voluntary action. This is the common nature of all voluntary actions, high or low, good or bad, egoistic or altruistic. If while at home one finds the temperature inside rather too hot i.e. unsatisfactory, he starts thinking of opening the window or the door or starting the fan. When dissatisfied with one's economic condition, one starts thinking of the various ways of earning money; as a result of which some one may turn to stealing, whereas another to labour or service. The patriot to whom the plight of his nation while in foreign bondage is unbearable will embark upon a series of actions involving great suffering to win national freedom.

The environment is thus doubly related to action. Therein lies both the origin as also the termination of the act. The tendency for action arises from the unsatisfactory nature of the existing environment, and terminates in giving it a satisfactory turn. An opposition or conflict between the existing environment and the agent's conception about its ideal state gives rise to such tendency for action. Out of the conflict between what is and what ought to be there arises the sense of dissatisfaction, and from it the tendency for action. So long as the agent feels that what is, is just what it ought to be, he will not be impelled to action.

The environment responsible for giving rise to the tendency for action can have two aspects. One is directly related to the personal ends of pleasure and pain, and gives rise to such mental states as *kāma*, anger, attachment, malice, fear, joy, sorrow and the like. The second aspect includes other factors besides the personal one and is related to non-egoistic ends. When charity is given with the purpose of removing the sufferer's pangs, the act is related to non-personal environment; on the contrary that given for the sake of one's name would come under egoistic action.

The impulse for egoistic action.

Let us further trace the genesis of voluntary action. We shall first see how the egoistic act takes shape. The source of such an act lies in the *bhāvanā* about one's personal pleasures and pains. *Bhāvanā* signifies firm belief or conviction in (or adherence to) the goals, values, ideas determined by a man in his mind. Emotions like anger are different from it. "The *bhāvanā* in Gītā is not a modification (disturbance, *vikāra*) of the mind, but a quality of the heart."¹ Emotions are the forms of mental excitement.² The sense of discontent about the prevailing environment gives rise to the impulse for action. The man is impelled to act in order to change that aspect of the environment which he regards as unsatisfactory, and to mould it according to his own ideas and beliefs. But so far the mind only decides the general direction or broad aim of the action. Its specific content has yet to be fixed, which is done by the deliberative reason. It makes a comparative study of the possible alternatives in the light of the prevailing environment and their consequences, and gives a decision as to which alternative would be acceptable in that situation. If one's heart is filled with malice against his neighbour, he will first experience a general tendency to do some act so as to gratify that malice and thereby enjoy pleasure. But this is only the 'form' of the act, and has yet to receive its 'matter' or 'content'. Thereafter the deliberative reason will fill in the particular details after a comparative study of the possible consequences of different acts against the background of the actual environment. When that is done, the initial 'empty' desire with but a bare 'form', that some action should be performed so as to harm the neighbour, will now receive the content and mature into the full desire³ that 'this particular act should be done'.

1. Vinoba Bhawe : *Shitaprajñā-darśana*, p. 128.

2. While ordinarily these mental modifications are known as 'emotions', perhaps the expression 'passions' may better convey the sense of the Sanskrit word *vikāra*. The word 'emotion' is also etymologically connected with the root 'to move' i.e. 'to be excited'. *Vikāra* connotes such mental excitement. Tranquility is the normal state of the soul, excitement being *vikṛti* i.e. a deviation from the norm.

3. This later desire may be given the distinctive name of 'wish'.

Selfless values.

The above is the analysis of egoistic voluntary action; that of the altruistic or selfless action being somewhat different. In the latter the initial conviction is associated with selfless values. Two such principal selfless goals may be mentioned here: one's own true (spiritual) good, and the same of others. While the goal of one's own spiritual uplift may literally speaking be termed 'selfish', it would not be so in accordance with the current use of that word. As seen previously, such a goal cannot be classed under egoistic attachment. The second selfless goal has been called by us as the 'good' (*hitam*) of others, not their pleasure (*sukham*) as such; the reason being that while the desire for one's own good can come into conflict with that for one's pleasure, there can be no such conflict between the desire for the good of others and that for their pleasure. Under the influence of *kāma*, anger and the like, one can desire his own pleasure even in opposition to his true good. But if he really desires the pleasure of others he will do so only as leading to the true good of theirs (according to his own conception). If one desires to secure pleasure for another in spite of the knowledge that it would be detrimental to the true good of the latter (e.g. deliberately tempting another to a wrong path to spoil his character), he will in fact be doing so out of some selfish attitude as envy, malice, greed etc.; and therefore in reality that act would fall under the category of the selfish, and not the selfless, action. In short, if the agent's stand is really non-egoistic, he will not deliberately desire the pleasure of another in conflict with the latter's true good. Therefore while the twin goals of one's good and one's pleasure are possible in connection with oneself, the only final goal in relation to others can be their good, of which their pleasure would be but a means.

While the non-egoistic goals may take the two forms of one's own good and the good of others, a further consideration will bring out the ultimate identity of even these two. The feelings of pleasure and pain being personal experiences a conflict between different individuals in respect of them is but natural. What pleases one can cause pain to another;

indeed it appears practically impossible to find even a single worldly object that will give pleasure to every one without exception. But there is no reason for such a conflict between individuals in respect of the spiritual uplift—the 'good'. Whatever will be conducive to the true good of one must be so for others also; or else, it will be found that it was not the true good at all but only an attractive variety of self-gratification. It has been observed time and again that no ethical argument can attain certainty and consistency unless it assumes such identity—or at least a non-opposition—between one's own good and that of others. That which will really bring about one's good cannot be opposed to the good of others; and what will bring about the good of others cannot but be conducive to one's own also.

While *kāma* may not be involved in an act motivated by a non-egoistic goal, such emotions as anger and vanity are possible. However, when the notion of oneself as the doer also subsides, these other emotions too vanish and the person acts without any emotion. Of course at the source of even such acts there is bound to be a feeling of discontent with the prevalent environment. But such feeling of discontent is one thing and an emotion is another. Though usually these two go together, a pure sense of discontent devoid of emotion is not impossible. When the true judge sees the law violated in a criminal's act, and feeling dissatisfied due to that violation, awards the proper sentence to him, he need experience no emotion while doing so. The sense of discontent only means to feel something wanting in the existing environment from the point of view of the ideal values. When one feels so, he desires to remove that lacuna. This is what is implied in all voluntary action. But in an ideal act there is no room for emotion.

Mixed acts.

The above account of the genesis of the selfish and the selfless action is of a theoretical nature. But in actual human conduct an unmixed act of either type would be unusual. Often our acts partake of the natures of both, with a difference in proportion. Most people are ready to practise

altruism if it does not conflict with their egoism. It would be very rare to find such utterly mean individuals as are averse to the happiness of others under all circumstances! In the mind of the common man there are the egoistic values and side by side others too in more or less proportion. Even with an egoistic motive for money, there would be many who would like to see that their acts do not result in wrongful deprivation of others. Otherwise all those who seek money would take to stealing. Therefore even though the ball of action may be set in motion by the desire for money, nevertheless other values in the agent's mind may also soon come into play, and thus when the content of the act is fixed it may on the whole turn out a good act. Whatever values the mind has a conviction in shape the person's act. To the extent to which such values are egoistic or altruistic the nature of his action would partake of that character. The only point is that when the initial tendency, the motive, is personal the overall act is ordinarily called egoistic; and when selfless, it is called non-egoistic. It is therefore possible to find acts that are egoistic by motive but *kārya* in their broad content.

Distinction between feelings and emotions.

It would be better to clarify here further that emotions are not the bare feelings of pleasure and pain. The latter are only the elementary experiences of agreeable and disagreeable feelings. On the contrary, joy, affection, malice, *kāma*, anger, fear, sorrow are emotions. An emotion is of the type of mental excitement. It is not necessary that there must be such mental excitement in the simple experiences of pleasure and pain. When pleasure is transformed into joy, and pain into sorrow, there results an excitement. An attraction for pleasure and an aversion for pain excite the mind. From that results the emotion of *kāma*. But an experience of pleasure without such attachment, and an experience of pain without aversion, are possible though difficult. The embodied soul is bound to have the bare experiences of pleasure and pain in the usual course of nature.

Some experiences are by their very nature agreeable to the organism; others are disagreeable. It is the biological law that when the stock of water goes down in the body there arises the disagreeable feeling of thirst, and when water is taken an agreeable feeling is produced. In fact these are but necessary suggestions thrown out by nature in order to maintain the living organism in a proper state. Their agreeableness or otherwise is dependent not on any particular wish in an individual's mind but on the state of the body. The experiences of pleasure and pain arising from such bodily feelings are different from the joy and sorrow experienced from the satisfaction or frustration of an egoistic desire of the mind as such. Even the ideal person of stabilised reason is bound to experience a disagreeable feeling i. e. pain on being pricked by a thorn, and pleasure on smelling a rose. The only point is that the common man gets attached to such pleasure and grieves for the pain; but a self-controlled person like King Janaka has neither any longing for the pleasure nor aversion for the pain.¹

Though the pleasure-pain feelings are often confused with emotions like *kāma* and anger, the author of the Gītā has not done so. While he advocates the *renunciation* of emotions like attachment, hate, fear and the like, as for pleasures and pains he advocates only an equanimous *indifference*, an experience of theirs without emotion and excitement. A complete abandonment of those pleasure-pain experiences is not possible for an embodied individual. It is however the duty of man not to let these (elementary) experiences develop into an emotion; and the Gītā precisely insists upon it. See the remarks of Kṛṣṇa just at the commencement of his discourse "Arjuna, the contacts with sense-objects that produce the experiences of cold or heat, pleasure or pain, have a beginning and an end and are therefore transitory. Endure them." (II/14.) The inevitability of the pleasure-pain experiences so long as the soul resides within the body has been nicely suggested here. The correct way to deal with them is their

1. See the description of King Dilipa in Kālidāsa's *Raghuvamśa*, I/21: *asaktaḥ sukhamaṇvabhūtī* ("He experienced pleasure without attachment").

endurance (*tīrksā*) without any excitement, and not abandonment or forced suppression. The swimmer in the ocean must learn to bear the waves. The experiences of pleasures and pain are bound to arise in the human mind on the contact of the senses with their objects. But even when they so arise, "that wise person, looking with equanimity upon pleasure and pain, who is not affected (disturbed in his peace of mind, swerved from the path of duty) by these (sense-contacts) becomes fit to attain immortality (Liberation)" (II/15). The proper attitude is to remain unaffected by them, not to let the mind be emotionally swayed i.e. excited due to such feelings. That is the meaning of the direction to regard pleasures and pains with equanimity, as expressed in verse II/38, and VI/7, 32 as well. We find the same idea in the following verses too—"He whose mind is not ruffled by sorrow nor has a longing for pleasure.." (II/56); "His reason should be regarded as stabilised who has no affection for anything, who feels neither elation nor aversion whatever happy or unhappy event comes to pass" (II/57). Similarly see also the following excellent direction:

na *prahṛṣyet* *prīyam* *prāpya*

nodvijet *prāpya* *cāprīyam*.....V/20

"One should not be puffed up with joy on having the agreeable i.e. pleasant experience; nor be subject to gloom at the disagreeable i.e. painful one." While pleasure is but a feeling, joy is an emotion. So also pain is a kind of feeling but gloom is a state of emotional excitement.¹

Such is the direction of the Gītā with reference to the feelings of pleasure and pain. Let us now look at the significantly different advice with respect to the emotions:

prajāhāni *yadā* *kāmān*

sarvān *pārtha* *manogatān*

1. Śankara too explains the word *udvighnam* (gloom) as *prakṣubhitam* (excited)—Vide his commentary on verse II/56.

ātmanyevātmanā tuṣṭaḥ
sthitaprajñastadocyate. II /55.

"Arjuna, when one totally abandons all *kāma* desires in the mind and remains content within himself, he is called the person of stabilised reason". As this refers not to the mere feelings of pleasure and pain but to the egoistic desires arising out of them, there is an advice of complete abandonment. The same sort of language is seen in verses II/71, and VI/24. Similarly the following apt phrases have been employed in Gītā with reference to emotions like anger, fear and the like: *vitarāgabhayakrodhaḥ* II/56 and IV/10 ("one free from attraction, fear and anger"), *rāgadveṣaviṣṇukṛtāḥ* II/64 ("devoid of attraction and aversion"), *kāmakrodhaviṣṇukṛtānām* V/26 ("those free from *kāma* and anger"), *vigateccābhābhayakrodhaḥ* V/28 ("one who has given up selfish desires, fear and anger"), *vitarāgāḥ* VIII/11 ("those without attraction or attachment"). While the feelings of pleasure and pain are inevitable for an embodied being, a relinquishment of the emotions is desirable and possible though certainly difficult. If while living in this world without any emotional excitement one experiences pleasure and pain due to the natural and unavoidable contacts of the senses with their objects, there is no reason to feel any inferiority on that account.

The origin of values.

Let us now consider the values. Some values are ultimate or primary while others are subsidiary or secondary. The latter are derived from the former. The ultimate value is not directly based on any reasoning as such. The very fact that a certain value is an ultimate one means that the logical chain of causation ends there. The desirability of the secondary values can be logically demonstrated; it consists in their capacity to lead to some higher value. But in the case of an ultimate value its desirability cannot thus be established.¹ An individual may or may not accept it; but there is no room for logical argument on the point.

1. See Mill : *Utilitarianism*, Chap. I para 4, and Chap. IV Para 1.

How are the values determined in the individual's mind? Apart from the direct experience of the ultimate spiritual goal possible for the highest enlightened souls, three other ways can be pointed out for the common man. They are Instinct, Testimony and Reasoning. Out of them the first two are for the determination of the final end while the last relates to the secondary values. The goal of egoistic pleasures is instinctively present in the mind of every one. But it is necessary to note that some part of the altruistic values is also instinctive. Not all the instinctive tendencies of man are egoistic. If man is instinctively selfish he is instinctively to some extent unselfish too. When the mother suckles the child it is principally for the child's pleasure and not her own; often the child is brought up even at the cost of the mother's own suffering. When at the sight of an impending accident, a stranger runs with all his strength to pull a child out of it, he does so only to save it and not with any selfish idea.

An instance of the value based on testimony can be had in the ideal of Liberation, *brahman*, identity between the cosmic self and individual soul, or self-realisation. Such an ultimate end can not be determined by logical reasoning. The Gītā therefore aptly describes the true self as 'transcending the reason' (III/42). To start with, its knowledge is obtained from reliable testimony—the words of respected persons.

tadviddhī prapīṭhena

paripraśnena sevayā

upadeśyanti te jñānam

jñānastattvadarśināḥ. IV/34

"The enlightened seers will impart to you (that highest) knowledge; obtain it from them with an attitude of reverence (making respectful obeisances), an enquiring mind (putting proper questions) and service (of theirs)." The ultimate realisation of such knowledge of course presupposes a preliminary faith in it on the pupil's part. That is the impli-

cation of the remark in the Gītā "he obtains knowledge who has faith (IV 39.)" The necessity of faith in some such final goal has been recognised on all hands. Without it the chain of logical reasoning would have no basis, and one runs the risk of being lost in scepticism (vide verse IV/40). While it would be improper to rely on mere faith where reasoning can adequately enlighten, nevertheless a resort to faith is but necessary where logic cannot penetrate at all. Such faith is super-rational, and not anti-rational or irrational, and therefore should not be confused with blind faith.

Limited sanctity of secondary values.

However, this reliance on testimony is only meant for the ultimate end. Descending lower down to the secondary values, we enter the sphere of logic and deliberative reason. The right way to reach the final goal has to be determined with discriminative consideration in the light of the entire situation. The broad paths which come to be fixed in this process by long experience attain the status of secondary values. It then becomes unnecessary to deliberate every time over the desirability of such a path. The masses can benefit themselves by pursuing the secondary values so determined. But it would be improper to bestow an unconditional authority on such secondary values. It must not be forgotten that they are based on reasoning. Though in the ordinary life such secondary values are accepted for the sake of convenience without a reference to their real logical basis, the right of an individual to enquire about such basis ought not to be disputed. And specially when faced by exceptional circumstances, the desirability of such secondary values ought to be open to discussion. In certain conditions it may even be proper to set aside such a secondary value.¹ A neglect of this fact affords an easy scope for meaningless customs and harmful usages in the society. The only true justification of a secondary goal is its suitability to lead the individual towards the final end; and therefore, whenever a change in the environment renders

1. For an instructive discussion of this point with illustrations, see chapter second of Tilak's work.

a secondary goal unfit for that purpose, it is the duty of the leaders of society to remove it from the social code of good conduct and substitute a different suitable one. But of course such a change is not to be sought for selfish purposes; and should be introduced by the social leaders after a thorough and balanced deliberation.

Need for consideration of consequences.

The deliberative reason thus performs the dual functions of determining the broad secondary values for general social guidance, and of fixing the specific content of individual acts. Both these functions necessarily involve the consideration of consequences. Indeed there is no other proper method of judging the rightness and wrongness of an act.¹ That act is right the consequences of which are either directly or indirectly (i.e. through the secondary values) helpful to the attainment of the final goal; and the contrary of it is a wrong one. It is often said that the Gītā is opposed to the deliberation over consequences. But that is only a half-truth. It is impossible to determine the morality or otherwise of an act, leaving out totally the consideration of consequences. It may be added that this deliberation about consequences is done sometimes explicitly and at other times implicitly. Even when the agent's attitude is non-egoistic, an act would be right only if its content is as a matter of fact desirable. Notwithstanding that the value inspiring an act is good, if the deliberative reason erroneously fixes a content that will not actually lead the doer to that goal, the act would be a wrong one. The moral quality of an act is thus dependent on its consequences.

Classification of consequences.

The consequences of any act may be thus classified :

1. "No morality ever existed which did not consider ulterior consequences to some extent". Sidgwick : *The Methods of Ethics*, p. 96.

Desired (called the 'motive').

Consequences	Foreseen	Not desired (called 'intention' by some writers).
	Unforeseen	Those which could and should have been foreseen by the agent.
		Those beyond the agent's power to foresee.

Out of these the first i.e. the desired foreseen consequences constitute the motive in the person's mind. It is their idea arising first in his mind, to translate which into actuality he is impelled to perform the act. Therefore it is obvious that the responsibility for their goodness or badness can not but rest on his shoulders. Not only this, but even if those consequences do not ultimately come about, the person is responsible for regarding them as his motive for that action.

But while all the desired consequences are foreseen, the converse is not true.¹ We know manytimes that a certain consequence would result from our action. Nevertheless not only is it not a desired consequence, but at times we even wish it not to happen. But if it is quite inevitable for the fulfilment of the original motive we reluctantly let it happen. On such occasions it is a foreseen but not desired consequence. Thus, while the pain of the patient in an operation is a foreseen consequence for the doctor, it is of course not a desired one. The mother punishing her child knows that her act would cause pain to it. But, needless to state, her motive is to reform the child and not make it suffer.

How far is a person responsible for such foreseen undesired consequences? Their responsibility will depend on the specific circumstances of every action. If the initial desired consequences are good, for which the foreseen non-desired ones are quite inevitable, the person may not be responsible

1. Sidgwick aptly designates the desired foreseen ones as 'consequences', while the undesired foreseen ones as 'concomitants'. (*Op. Cit.* pp. 110-111). However, according to this terminology, the common genus covering both these would probably be called 'effects'.

for them even though they are normally undesirable. On the contrary, if the initial motive is itself bad, the person would be responsible for the non-desired consequences even though they are inevitable. For instance, if during the murder of a personal enemy a criminal finds it inevitable to kill some one else too, he would be responsible for the murder of both. If however, the non-desired foreseen consequences are avoidable, their responsibility will necessarily fall upon the person whatever be the nature of the initial motive.

The unforeseen consequences are also of two kinds. One of them would be those which the agent did not foresee though it was possible for him to do so. He can not escape their responsibility. Suppose a man goes out after placing a loaded gun in a room where a child is playing; and the latter handles it causing an accident. One can not here defend himself by urging that he had not anticipated it. It was so natural and obvious that he could and ought to have anticipated it. The agent can not be held responsible, however, for those unforeseen consequences which he could not have anticipated at all. One can be hardly responsible if he goes out after keeping a loaded gun in a locked alimrah with all possible care, and the naughty child of a guest arriving in his absence coming into possession of a duplicate key handles the gun.

The above account of consequences will show that there is no such opposition between the motive and the consequences as is often supposed. When the question is raised whether the morality of an act should be determined with reference to the motive or the consequences, it is assumed that the two are quite exclusive of each other. But motive is only one kind of the consequences. The foreseen desired consequences are known as motive. The moral quality of an act, however, can not be made dependant solely on it. Not only the desired, but all the foreseen consequences and even those unforeseen ones the anticipation of which was not beyond the agent's ken, throw light on the morality of an action. In short, except those unforeseen consequences the anticipation of which was not normally possible for the person, all the other consequences are concerned in the determination of the rightness of

action. It does not seem correct to maintain that an act should be deemed moral if its motive is good, no matter what its actual consequences are. Even when the consequences of an act are non-egoistic from the agent's personal viewpoint, if they are not in fact conducive to the true good of others, it would not be a moral act.¹

According to the Gītā the motive as also the content of the act ought to be pure; and besides, the agent ought to be devoid of the ego-sense. Before elucidating further that conception of the ideal act, however, let us briefly review some prominent Western schools of ethics; and first the school of Utilitarianism advocated by the English moralists Bentham and Mill.

1. In connection with the classification of consequences here is a useful clarification. Amongst the consequences of an act some are desired and constitute the motive. Besides, the initial tendency to action is also based on some general idea of consequences. As a matter of fact those consequences too are desired and so of the nature of motive. But while the latter is the 'initial' impelling motive, the desired consequences enter the content of the act constitute the 'visible' motive. Suppose, seeing A in acute privation B feels pity and is moved to act. Here the general idea of the removal of A's misery is the 'initial' motive of B. Now in furtherance of it he can help A with food, money or a job. This would be reflecting over the content. B chooses the third course. With that 'visible' motive he recommends A to C, who has already a servant D, whose work was not satisfactory, which fact B is knowing. C employs A and dismisses D. Here D's dismissal is a non-desired foreseen consequence of B's act. But besides it, D's sickly wife receives a shock by that dismissal and expires. B had no idea of her health, nor was there any reason why he should have known it. No responsibility for her death would fall on B.

CHAPTER X

THE DOCTRINE OF UTILITARIANISM

Worldly pleasure of Utilitarianism.

The first thing to be noted in connection with utilitarianism is that the pleasure which Bentham and Mill regard as the final end is the secular worldly pleasure. I am specially using here the word 'secular' (*laukika*) and not the word 'sensual' (*aindriyika*). For the utilitarians feel offended if it is suggested that the pleasure which is their final end is only a sensual one. Thus it has been urged by Mill in self-defence that while animals like the dog, cat, pig, etc. are capable of only sensual pleasure, the human capacity of enjoyment extends also to the higher 'qualities' of pleasure; and that whatever type of pleasure it is possible for man to enjoy ought to be included in the hedonistic goal of the utilitarians.¹ But while that may be true so far as it goes, it must be added that looking to the illustrations of non-sensual human pleasures given by Bentham and Mill, their idea of pleasure is after all only one of the secular type. We do not find in the utilitarian school any indication of that state of transcendental bliss born of the supremely equanimous attitude of stabilised reason visualised in the Gītā. The pure happiness of the Gītā is uniform and undivided; whereas Mill conceives divisions in it.² While the former is throughout of one quality without any distinction, Mill recognises distinctions of quality in pleasure.³ According to the Gītā the attainment of that

sublime state of beatitude is not possible without the elimination of all egoistic desires in the mind,¹ whereas Mill includes in his final hedonistic goal even such pleasures as those of music, bodily health, power, fame, money, and the like.² While the Gītā spurns the state of mental excitement by directing that "one should not be puffed up with joy on having the agreeable i.e. pleasant experience" (V/20), to Mill 'excitement' is an essential ingredient of human pleasure.³

In short, the entire argument of Bentham and Mill is directed to the goal of making human life as happy as possible from the worldly point of view, and to reduce to the minimum the suffering therein. Though in his argument Mill uses the two words 'pleasure' and 'happiness', nevertheless he employs the selfsame former word in his elucidation of the latter,⁴ and does not seem to regard them as basically different. When Bentham and Mill say that in their ideal state human suffering would be reduced 'as far as possible', they only think of poverty, unemployment, accidents, diseases, atrocities, and such other worldly suffering.⁵ On the contrary, when the Gītā asserts that "With the attainment of sublime contentment all sufferings of man end" (II/63), the sweep of its vision refers not so much to the mundane sufferings themselves as to their basic roots like the egoistic hankering after pleasures, the 'cycle of births and deaths',⁶ nescience about true nature of the self, etc.

Therefore, we find a clear difference between the ideal state described in the Gītā in such terms as 'infinite bliss' (VI/28), 'supreme tranquility' (IV/39), 'the state of uniform, happiness devoid of all suffering whatsoever', (VI/21, 23), 'eternal bliss' (V/21) on the one hand, and the final goal

1. *Utilitarianism* (Longmans, Green & Co., London, eleventh edition), pp. 10-11.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 54, 55, 56, 57.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 11-14. Since all these distinctions fall within the province of the worldly pleasure itself, Mill does not reach the transcendental state of bliss in spite of them. And besides, he has to face the difficulty that the qualitative distinction in pleasures is inconsistent with his basic stand about pleasure being the sole end of life.

1. *vide* II/55, etc.

2. *Op. Cit.*, pp. 54-57; see specially: "They are some of the elements of which the desire of happiness is made up.....And the utilitarian standard sanctions and approves their being so" (p. 56). "The utilitarian standardtolerates and approves these other acquired desires....." (p. 57).

3. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 18. See the detailed extract quoted below.

5. For example see *ibid.*, pp. 21-22.

6. *jama-marāṇa-cakra* ; vide Gītā II/51, XII/7.

of pleasure as clarified by Mill in the following observations. Says he : "If by happiness be meant a continuity of highly pleasurable excitement, it is evident enough that this is impossible. A state of exalted pleasure lasts only moments, or in some cases, and with some intermissions, hours or days, and is the occasional brilliant flash of enjoyment, not the permanent and steady flame. Of this the philosophers who have taught that happiness is the end of life were as fully aware as those who taunt them. The happiness which they meant was not a life of rapture; but moments of such, in an existence made up of few and transitory pains, many and various pleasures, with a decided predominance of the active over the passive, and having as the foundation of the whole, not to expect more from life than it is capable of bestowing. A life thus composed, to those who have been fortunate enough to obtain it, has always appeared worthy of the name of happiness. And such an existence is even now the lot of many, during some considerable portion of their lives. The present wretched education, and wretched social arrangements, are the only real hindrance to its being attainable by almost all."¹

The secular standpoint in this extract is quite apparent from the beginning to the end. Mill thinks that there are several individuals in the world who have attained such an ideal state, and that with some necessary social and educational reforms almost all the persons in the world can do the same. The Gītā's ideal of life is from one point of view not so easy of achievement, and from another viewpoint not so difficult too ! The means of achieving that ideal as advocated by the Gītā are different from those of Mill. The author of the Gītā does not excuse the moral downfall of the individual by merely putting the blame on the current social maladjustment. He lays a far greater emphasis on the individual's reformation by himself than on social reform :

*uddharedātmanātmānam
nātmānamavasādayet*

1. *Ibid*, pp. 18-19.

*ātmaiva hyātmāno bandhur-
ātmaiva ripurātmānah.
bandhurātmānmanastasya
yendātmavātmānā jītaḥ
anātmanastu śāstrute
vartatātmāiva śāstruvāt.*

VI/5

VI/6

"One ought to uplift himself; and not cause himself to be degraded. For he alone is his own friend (benefactor) and himself his own enemy too—5. He himself is his own friend, who has conquered himself (i.e. his senses and mind); but he who has not thus conquered himself behaves towards himself as an enemy." Such is the direction of the Gītā to every man. In this self-uplift there need be no real impediment other than the weakness of the individual's own will and effort. While the pursuit of the ideal is thus easy from one point of view, being dependent on one's own earnestness, a man has however to face very strongly the internal obstructions of his own diverse weaknesses. Hence if asked how many persons in the world thus uplift themselves, the reply of the Gītā (contrary to that of Mill) would be "Out of thousands, hardly a solitary man seeks perfection; (and) even out of those (rare persons) who make such effort barely anyone knows 'me' truly (i.e. attains that perfection)". (VII/3).

Thus, while the ideal state of bliss according to the Gītā is a transcendental spiritual one, it is obvious that the pleasure of utilitarianism is but sensual and mental, in one word secular. And with secular pleasure as the ideal, the conflict between the pleasure of one's own and that of others becomes inevitable; writers on ethics being obliged to resort to various arguments to reconcile the two. While clarifying the ultimate values it has already been said above that there need be no conflict between one's spiritual good and the same of others. But in the province of the secular pleasures and pains, it is not unusual to come across the sight of "a sweet music going on at one place, whereas (at the same time) frenzied weeping at another"¹, or a downfall of one being

1. *kvacidvīṇāvādhyam kvacidapi ca hāhēti rudītam.*

accompanied by the rise of another. In the field of worldly affairs it is but natural that what pleases one might displease another. Though through social reforms the inequalities and differences can be more or less reduced, a complete elimination of them does not seem possible. It is therefore that while the Gītā's ideal person pursues "the good of the entire creation" (V/25), Mill lacking the basic conception of the ultimate identity of all souls has to express his idea of the final goal of life through such a faltering expression as 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number'.

Motive and intention.

In their attempt to reconcile egoism and altruism Mill and Bentham have advanced the following argument. Drawing a distinction between the basic impelling motive of action and its intention (detailed content), they urge that the moral quality of an act should be judged only by its intention no matter what the motive is. According to this view, the morality of an action should be determined only by the consideration as to whether it (i.e. its content) is right or wrong, without considering whether the initial motive is egoistic or otherwise. Of course the rightness or wrongness of the content is to be judged (according to the utilitarians) by the pleasant or painful character of its consequences; and needless to add, therein more emphasis is to be placed on the greatest happiness of the greatest number than on personal pleasures. Even if the motive of an act is egoistic, the act should be deemed moral if it be altruistic in content. For example, if one saves the life of a drowning person, may be with the hope of money, there should be no objection on this view to treat it as an altruistic act, notwithstanding that it is egoistic in respect of the motive. Let the natural egoistic tendency in man reside in the motive; but it should suffice if the altruistic viewpoint is adopted in the content of the act.

It would however be desirable to keep here in mind the precise sense in which Mill employs the word 'motive'.

Out of the two aspects of a voluntary act, viz the initial tendency for action and the actual content, it is only for the former that he employs the word motive. The initial tendency points to the broad direction of an act, the detailed nature of which is determined by the deliberative reason. Keeping this in view let us go through the following observations of Mill: "The motive has nothing to do with the morality of the action, though much with the worth of the agent"¹; and similarly, "The morality of the action depends entirely upon the intention—that is upon what the agent *wills to do*. But the motive, that is, the feeling which makes him will so to do, when it makes no difference in the act, makes none in the morality: though it makes a great difference in our moral estimation of the agent, especially if it indicates a good or bad habitual *disposition* a bent of character from which useful, or from which hurtful consequences are likely to arise"²; What Mill means here is that in judging the moral quality of action one need consider only the content i.e. the intention as determined by the deliberative reason, but not the nature of the initial tendency (motive) of that act—whether it is egoistic or otherwise, based on hate or love. If however any special quality of the latter makes a difference in the content of the act, the motive too may then be taken into consideration while judging the morality of the act. But while the motive is thus (ordinarily) irrelevant in determining the moral quality of the act as such, its consideration is necessary in passing a judgment upon the personal character of the agent.

Let us take an illustration. Two persons 'A' and 'B' both desire to give a certain amount of money to C in charity. 'A' desires to do so with the pure idea of C's good. But 'B' desires to do it out of a feeling of envy for 'A', with the idea that the latter alone may not get a name in that respect. Now since the 'intention' i.e. the content of

1. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 27 foot note.

both the acts is identical, they ought to be regarded on Mill's view as equally moral. One may say that out of the two individuals 'A' has a better character as a person. But their *acts* are of the same level. Not only this, if the envious 'B' gives in charity double the amount in order to bring down 'A', his act would have to be judged more moral than that of the latter. But if B goes a step further, and directly interferes in an undesirable manner even in the content of the act, and therefore while giving the charity he imposes some improper condition or does some other wrong thing, then that would affect the moral quality of the act too. Such is the nature of Mill's above contention.

Consideration of motive essential in the ethics of action.

Let us now consider this idea of Mill to distinguish the basic motive from the actual act and judge the morality of the latter independently of the former. It will bring out by comparison the superiority of the Gītā's theory of action. If, as urged by Mill, external consequences alone are taken into consideration in judging the moral quality of action, it is true that an act egoistically inspired but actually right (resulting in good consequences) could be regarded as quite moral. But how far will the egoistic attitude in the agent's mind go without influencing the nature of the act in the long run? That such an influence is not impossible has been admitted by Mill himself through his words 'if it makes no difference in the act.' If the egoistic person persists in the act for a long time, the effect would become manifest turning the content of action in a different direction. Hence the correctness of the view of the Gītā that the ideal act should be right (*kārya*) in content and at the same time non-egoistic (*niskāma*) in motive. Suppose two individuals join the national army and participate in a war; but one of them is prompted solely by the motive of money or power, whereas the other by pure patriotism. If the two fight with equal sincerity and produce the same consequences conducive to national good, their acts will be judged on the view of Mill as of equal moral worth, though the

motive of one is egoistic while of the other non-egoistic. But the question is, how long would the two fight with the same intensity? While the one prompted by the love of money may in the beginning fight with the same intensity as the other, would he show the same daring as the patriotic soldier on an occasion demanding his life itself?

Besides it has to be noted that just as the egoistic motive produces effects on the external act, it also influences in a subtle manner the agent's own mental state. As observed by the sage Vyās "Verily *kāma* is not pacified by the gratification thereof; on the contrary it increases all the more even as the fire does by the offering of (clarified) butter and the like."¹ The edge of the egoistic attitude is sharpened, not blunted, by its gratification. The Gītā therefore does not subscribe to the view of Mill that the morality of an act should be exclusively judged by the external consequences, without giving any consideration to the quality of the initial motive. Though the egoistic nature of an act may not produce an undesirable influence on its actual content for the time being, it may go on corroding the mind; and if not restrained, can in course of time modify even the overall nature of the act. If one starts trade with the sole motive of money, without any idea of social good, after trading in the legitimate manner for some time he would be gradually tempted to follow improper methods e.g. adulteration of goods, or exorbitant profits, and the like. The correct way to keep aloof from it is to assign to the non-egoistic standpoint—the ideal of social good—a place in the initial motive for the trade. The mere fear of state punishment is not quite adequate the remedy for it; a trader restrained only by it may seek to safeguard his interests by bribing the officers. Similarly the fear of public disrepute too can not serve as an adequate check. For, here too while earning enormous profits by wrong means one may spend a portion in social charity just to throw dust in the eyes of the public. It is therefore

1. Mahābhārat, Ādi-Parva, 75/49.

that the sanctions advocated by Bentham are said to be incapable of turning a man into a really altruistic one.

In view of all this the Gītā's insistence on the absence of the egoistic attitude in the ideal act is certainly justified. Considering that to meet any immediate situation the performance of duty though with an egoistic attitude is relatively better than its desertion even with a non-egoistic standpoint, Kṛṣṇa gave to Arjuna even that latitude (vide II/37) and directed that the first essential thing was to perform the duty of that righteous war. But thereafter keeping in view the permanent human good he also pointed out the evils of egoistic attitude, and advised its complete avoidance (III/41,43).

We have so far discussed some of the salient points of the utilitarian school of Bentham and Mill. There are several weaknesses in the expositions of both. For example, Mill's proofs for the final goal of the greatest happiness of the greatest number are quite superficial.¹ Besides, he interprets the word pleasure in different senses on different occasions. While at times he means thereby one's personal pleasure, at other places he seems to include therein even altruistic happiness. So also, if it is pointed out that sometimes the object of a man's desires is other than pleasure, Mill forthwith describes it as a 'part' of pleasure and thus seeks to hold on to the thesis that pleasure is the only goal of life.

There is little doubt, however, that the overall viewpoints and conclusions of Bentham and Mill are in the direction of the social good. Both were seekers of social progress. But even so, their theory is centred round the worldly type of pleasure. Within that field their reasoning is of considerable merit. Even the sanctions of morality advocated by Bentham, though liable to criticism from the point of view of the ideal action, are certainly helpful as necessary restraints, may be external, for the conduct of the common man. But after conceding this, their attempt clearly illustrates the great difficulty in founding the science of ethics on mere worldly pleasure as the final goal of life. The next thing to be noted

1. *Utilitarianism*, pp 52-53

is that from such a worldly standpoint a reconciliation of the egoistic and altruistic goals becomes in the end impossible. The third point is the untenability of the view that the moral quality of action should be judged solely by its external consequences, by their pleasant or painful character, without any consideration of the quality of the inner motive.

Kant wanted to free ethics from this uncertainty and relativity. The conclusions of mathematics, due to a standpoint independent of any particular environment, enjoy an unconditional certainty. Kant aimed at establishing equally certain principles in the field of ethics too. Whoever be the person making the calculation, and whatever his environment, two and two are bound to make four. May it not be possible to frame laws of ethics that will also possess a similar unqualified validity? The fact that a debtor repaying his debt will be pleased if two and two are supposed to make five does not render that miscalculation a correct one; nor is it wrong just because it would cause pain to the creditor receiving the repayment. The criterion of mathematical truth is purely theoretical and does not depend upon any person, environment or consequences whether pleasant or painful. Is it possible to formulate a science of ethics which would lay down that any act—whatever its content or whoever the agent—so long as done with a specified attitude or point of view will be moral and will otherwise be immoral?

The good will.

Thinking along these lines Kant found that there is only one thing which is unconditionally good, and that is the subjective purity of the agent's mind, the 'good will' behind his act. All other things derive their goodness from it. Knowledge, strength, power, wealth—even the utilitarian desire for happiness—are all good only if the agent's will within is good. Without it they will prove but veritable curses. Humanity need not be reminded of the dangers of power or knowledge in evil hands. Indeed, even with respect to that attitude of unruffled equanimity which the Gītā praises, Kant urges that only if the heart is moved by goodwill can that mental calm be deemed a virtuous one; whereas, on the contrary, "the coolness of a villain not only makes him far more dangerous, but also directly makes him more abominable in our eyes than he would have been without it."¹

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

CHAPTER XI

THE CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE OF KANT

Contrary viewpoints of Mill and Kant.

While according to Mill the morality of an act should be judged by the consequences, the celebrated German idealist Immanuel Kant¹ maintains that the consideration of consequences is irrelevant to the passing of moral judgment. Kant holds a very high place in the field of western philosophical thought, and his original contribution has left a deep and lasting impression on it. Besides, Kant having advocated the very view of an exclusive emphasis on the agent's subjective attitude irrespective of the consequences of the act, which is attributed by some writers to the Gītā, a critical consideration of Kant's theory assumes a special importance in the study of the ethics of the Gītā. We are of course concerned here with his views on ethics only and not on other matters.

As may be seen from the last chapter, the view that seeks to hang the moral standard exclusively on the peg of the worldly pleasant or painful consequences is unable to arrive at any universally true rule of morality. In fact its advocates are not quite able even to extricate themselves from the entanglement of egoism. Pleasure and pain being personal feelings, such experience depends not only on the nature of the act itself but also on the person's particular mental state and prevalent environment. The same event may be felt differently from the hedonistic point of view in different moods and circumstances. Therefore if the moral act is defined as one that results in pleasant consequences, it is hardly possible to lay down a rule of morality valid for all time or for all persons. All ethics thus becomes, relative.

1. The quotations here are from *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Ethics* (Eng. Tr. by T. K. Abbott, Longmans, Green & Co., 1923).

The purity of the will being thus the only unconditional good thing in the world, there naturally arises the question as to its precise nature and characteristics. Kant's attempt is to determine the nature of this good will without reference to any particular environment and consequences. If it could be done, ethics would secure a foundation true for all time, thus freeing it from the bondage of the relativity of time and place.

Kant explains this good will through the following three propositions.

(1) The moral act is always done from the exclusive viewpoint of duty; its primary motive being nothing but the performance of duty. The attitude behind it is just the one described in the words of the Gītā *kāryamityeva kṛiyate* "doing the duty purely from a sense of duty" (XVIII/9). In this connection Kant distinguishes between the will to do duty as such, and the natural inclination in the mind of a man. An act performed out of a natural inclination (e.g. love or affection) will not be a truly moral act; not even if actually it results in happy consequences. If one renders help to another—at the proper moment, in the proper form—out of a feeling of love and affection for him, it would not amount to a truly moral act. But if that help is given purely as a matter of duty, without being moved by love or affection, it would become a moral act. A true judge while acquitting or convicting an accused is guided not by any favourable or unfavourable inclination, but solely by the sense of duty.

(2) The moral worth of such an act performed out of the sense of duty does not depend on its intention, i.e. the foreseen consequences, but purely on the goodness of the agent's will. It is not the happy social consequences that make the judge's act noble; the source of its morality lies in its being performed by the judge solely from the viewpoint of duty. If a judge sentences an accused with a personal grudge in mind his act will not be moral even though it were to result in healthy social consequences.

(3) Lastly, Kant explains what he means by the sense of duty. It implies unqualified respect for the moral law. If while doing an act, the agent is moved by no natural in-

clination, by nothing but respect for the moral law as such, he could be said to be performing duty.

To summarise, the sense of duty consists in being impelled to do an act out of pure respect for the basic moral law; an act with such attitude is a moral act; and the morality of such an act follows solely from that sense of duty, any consideration of its actual consequences being irrelevant for it.

The basic moral law: its three forms.

Now, what after all is that moral law on which all this reasoning is based? In view of the abovesaid nature of Kant's attempt, it is but natural that in determining the nature of that law he should seek to keep aside all consideration about the circumstances in which an act is performed. The environment constantly changes according to the place and time. Any thing dependent on such environment can hardly remain permanent and everlasting. No thing resting on a rotating wheel can remain static. Kant has therefore made a novel attempt to determine the basic moral law purely from the theoretical viewpoint, without taking any note of the factor of environment—whether the mental disposition of the agent or the external situation. In his opinion this moral law is not based on any human experience, which being by its very nature more or less imperfect and relative to the environment, would affect the absolute character of the moral law also.

Kant describes this transcendental, apodeictic, unconditional by environment, *a priori*, fundamental moral law in three forms:—(1) 'Act only on that maxim whereby thou canst at the same time will that it should become a universal law'. (2) 'So act as to treat humanity, whether in thine own person or in that of any other, in every case as an end withal, never as means only.' (3) 'Act with the attitude that thou art a member of a universal kingdom of ends'.

Technical standard of morality.

In the first of these formulae Kant is saying that when doing any act one should never regard himself as different

from the rest. All men in the world are equal in the eye of ethics. To make an exception of oneself is the root of evil and immorality. There should be no objection to any one else doing what I wish to do; and if there be, I too should not do it. If all can not follow a rule, it does not deserve to be followed by any one. Kant, however, has a special implication in this connection as clarified by him through the following illustrations. If some one is thinking of breaking a promise he should consider thus. What, if all decide to follow such an act of promise-breaking? In that case, no one will trust any one else and none will accept any other's word; obviously then there will remain no occasion for any one to give a faithful promise to any one else and therefore no promise to break. How will it then be possible to continue promise-breaking itself? In this way, the maxim of promise-breaking is such that any attempt to universalise its practice makes the act itself impossible. Therefore that act is an immoral one. Another illustration given by Kant is that of suicide. If every one were to commit suicide none will be left over to continue that act itself. Thus, a universalisation of suicide would destroy the act itself; and so suicide is bad. Here is one more illustration (not given by Kant). Why is treachery towards a friend immoral? On Kant's reasoning that act would be bad because a universal conduct in that direction will result in the disappearance of friendship itself, making it impossible to continue that act of treachery towards friends.

Some one may raise here an objection. Kant's aim from the very start was to determine the moral standard without any reference to consequences. But when he urges that an act should be deemed immoral if its universalisation results in the destruction of that act itself, is this not also after all a consideration of its consequences? In defence of Kant, however, the following may possibly be urged here. When he declares the moral law as independent of consequences, he seems to mean by the term consequences those specific modifications that are actually brought about in the prevailing conditions as a result of the act. It is such factual consequences, relative to time and place, that Kant seeks to

keep the moral law free from. But the consequences referred to in his above illustrations are just, theoretical ones pertaining to the field of reason alone, and independent of actual changing experience. The consequences to which the common man refers are contingent upon the environment, and are liable to exceptions. That an error in an arithmetical calculation will cause unhappiness to some one is a consequence in that popular sense. But that the error makes the calculation wrong from the point of view of the science of mathematics itself, that it destroys the selfconsistency of that science, is a consequence of the theoretical type. Whatever be the environment, every science must of course possess internal consistency. In the above illustrations Kant desires to consider only such academic consequences. If the act of suicide is universalised, it produces an inconsistency in the field of thought pertaining to that act itself, and renders it impossible. Therefore, according to Kant, it is possible to demonstrate the immorality of such acts as promise-breaking and suicide merely from the academic point of view which holds true for all time, without any consideration of individual temperament or particular environment.¹

The noble goal of humanity.

According to Kant, the first formula gives the general 'form' of the moral law, whereas the second gives its 'matter'. In the latter Kant lays down the ideal for the human will. The end of all action must be humanity. It is axiomatic and not liable to any proof, argumentative or empirical. This ideal of Kant is undoubtedly noble. Every one ought to regard every one else as an ultimate absolute end, and not merely as a means to any other person; indeed even the humanity in one's own person ought not to be looked upon merely as a means for one's physical pleasures. The man who commits suicide due to being disappointed by

1. One may say that the consequences in Kant's illustrations are but rational deductions from the bare idea of the act, rather than environmental modifications resulting from an actual commission of that act.

misfortune looks upon the humanity within him as a means to his worldly happiness. Through this formula Kant is giving expression to his clear opposition to all sort of individual, social, religious, political and international exploitation and dictatorship. The above direction of his is a virtual *magna charta* of human liberty in the field of ethics. His idea of humanity is also broadbased and noble; unlike Mill and Bentham, it is not confined to secular happiness alone. Kant says that the true meaning of regarding humanity as an end in itself is not that one should merely sit still and let the *status quo* just continue in that respect, but that every one ought to endeavour as much as he can for the advancement of humanity in himself and in others.¹ He further adds that 'the ends of any subject which is an end in himself, ought as far as possible to be my ends also'; that there should be no conflict between my service of humanity within myself, and that of the humanity within others. The Gītā also expresses a similar direction. While on the one hand it describes the ideal man as "remaining content within himself" (II/55, III/17), it also describes him as "absorbed in the pursuit of the good of the entire creation" (V/25, XII/4), and as "one who has identified his self with the selves of all beings" (V/7). Kṛṣṇa describes himself as "the wellwisher o all beings" (V/29).

The idea in the third direction of Kant is that every individual is to voluntarily lay down the law and follow it too. It is a corollary of the second direction. In the ideal society no one imposes a law forcibly on any other. Every body's will functions with freedom. And since each person thinks on the lines of the pure reason, there are no individual differences in the conception of the law. If any law is found to vary in individual application, it will be annulled according to the first formula. The chief characteristic of such kingdom of ends is pure moral conduct performed voluntarily by every one with a universal point of view and from a bare sense of duty. Of course as said by Kant himself,² it is but a picture of the ideal. That a man should

1. *Op. Cit.* p. 58.

2. *Ibid.* p. 62.

keep this ideal before the view and act accordingly is what is meant in his third direction.

In fact these three directions are not quite independent of each other, but are rather 'three modes of presenting the principle of morality', 'are at bottom only so many formulae of the very same law, and each of itself involves the other two'. The central idea therein is that humanity possesses the same value everywhere and that its true progress is the final goal of life. Kant rightly maintains that this ideal of universal humanity is axiomatic and not dependent on any mundane proof, experience or environment. The Gītā also agrees with this noble concept of the unity of all humanity.¹

By means of the above directions Kant seeks to determine the rules of morality necessary for the guidance of the daily life. He thinks that it would thus be possible to formulate the science of ethics with an absolute character unrelated to environment. Let us now examine briefly this view of his.

Kant's criterion makes many a good act bad and vice versa.

Kant's first direction is : Act only on that maxim whereby thou canst at the same time will that it should become a universal law. It is true that in the daily life such a direction will be of considerable use in keeping one on the right path. Why should I do that which all others may not do? One often seeks a special right or privilege for himself due to narrow self-interest. If he thinks on these lines on such occasions he will realise his error. Nevertheless, it is necessary to point out here that theoretically speaking the above direction fails to provide a complete and unerring test of the good act. Many an undoubtedly good act would turn out to be bad according to it. Following the same technical reasoning by which Kant demonstrates the immorality of promise-breaking, even the act of teaching could be disapproved. For, if all persons in the world seek to be teachers, who would be students, and how then to continue

1. Vide V/18; VI/29, 30. See also further references to the Gītā and Mahābhārata on this point in Chapter XIII.

the act of teaching itself? The act of teaching if universalised cancels itself. The same is true of being the general in an army. If all were to be generals who will be soldiers, and how can a general function without the latter? Indeed, one may here refer to Kant's own lifelong celibacy; if all follow it who will eventually remain to continue that rule itself? A patriot mounts the gallows for the good of millions of countrymen, and the nation adores him. But if all the countrymen were to do likewise, for whom is that to be done? And if all were to do it, who will continue this maxim of patriotic martyrdom?

Kant's above criterion not only keeps some good acts outside the fold of morality, but may sanction some bad acts too. What shall we say e.g. about smoking? Supposing everyone desires to smoke, theoretically there would be nothing impossible in it. The same is true of drinking and the like. Thinking only formally, what is impossible in the universalisation of such acts?

This point did not escape the notice of Kant himself. He seems to have been conscious that from the merely theoretical standpoint his direction would sanction even some bad acts. Though he demonstrated the undesirability of promise-breaking (or giving a false promise) and suicide on grounds of mere technical inconsistency, nevertheless when he came to his third and fourth illustrations he could not maintain the same stand. And that exposed the fallacy inherent in his argument. His third illustration is that of a well-to-do man, who without caring to develop his natural gifts desires to lead a life of mere eat-drink-and-be merry type. Now, from the mere theoretical point of view there seems nothing impossible, even if all men decide to lead such a life of sensual pleasures. Kant himself admits it in the following words: 'He (the said pleasure-seeker) asks, however, whether his maxim of neglect of his natural gifts, besides agreeing with his inclination to indulgence, agrees also with what is called duty. He sees then that a system of nature could indeed subsist with such a universal law although men (like the South Sea Islanders) should let their talents rust, and resolve to devote their lives merely to idleness, amusement,

and propagation of their species—in a word to enjoyment."¹

Kant's escape: inconsistency in argument.

But if such conduct is possible on the universal scale, may we accept that idle pleasure-seeking as moral? The idealist in Kant could never agree to it. In condemning that attitude, however, he had to abandon his original stand and admit inconsistency in his reasoning. To escape from the above difficulty Kant urges the following: (even though a universalisation of that lazy rusting attitude is theoretically not impossible) "but he cannot possibly *will* that this should be a universal law of nature, or be implanted in us as such by a natural instinct. For, as a rational being, he necessarily wills that his faculties be developed, *since they serve him, and have been given him, for all sorts of possible purposes*."² But in these observations Kant has abandoned the field of purely theoretical considerations, and resorted to the factual effects related to specific environment and temperament. Here of course the objection mentioned a few pages back could be urged against him. Though a universalisation of the lazy attitude is technically possible, Kant is here disapproving it on such extraneous considerations as human temperament, natural inclinations, the idea of a man's future benefit, and the like. It is like arguing that it is a duty to educate oneself because thereby one will secure a high office, wealth, name etc. While this argument may have considerable force it is inconsistent with Kant's original stand—his conception of ethics as unconcerned with environment and the related factual consequences.

Finally, in his fourth illustration Kant's original stand has been all the more thrown overboard. Should a fortunate person in prosperous circumstances help the poor? Kant admits that there would be no theoretical inconsistency if such a man does not do so. A society is not impossible wherein every one is absorbed in his narrow family life, with indifference towards the lot of others; in which, while none positively persecutes another, none helps any one too. Such a society

1. *Op. cit.*, p. 48.

2. *Ibid*, p. 48. Italics of '*will*' original; rest italics mine.

would indeed be preferable to one wherein the members try to actually cheat each other. And yet, no one would approve the spread of such an attitude of mutual indifference in the society. Kant gives the following reason for it. "But although it is possible that a universal law of nature might exist in accordance with that maxim, it is impossible to *will* that such a principle should have the universal validity of a law of nature. For a will which resolved this would contradict itself, in as much as many cases might occur in which one would have need of the love and sympathy of others, and in which, by such a law of nature, sprung from his own will, he would deprive himself of all hope of the aid he desires."¹ In this justification of the sympathy for others Kant seems definitely to have taken recourse to the utilitarian ethics of consequences.² The consequences referred to in this justification are not merely theoretical like the internal inconsistency in mathematics, but are those concerned with the actual circumstances.³

Thus if we consistently adopt the standpoint of Kant, whose general aim is the formulation of ethics on the basis of the purity of the subjective attitude without reference to environment, we fail to arrive at an adequate moral standard.

Rules and exceptions.

One source of this confusion of Kant may be seen in his misconception about the relation between a law and an exception. He seems to assume that all exceptions to the common rules of morality originate in narrow self-interest;

1. *Ibid*, p. 49.

2. One is reminded here of Spencer's attempt to reconcile egoism and altruism from the standpoint of Hedonism.

3. Is it to keep such escape open that Kant has used the word 'will' in his first formula? For, from the merely theoretical point of view it could as well be expressed thus: "Act only on that maxim which can conceivably become a universal law". As for an individual's *will*, it can differ from man to man and according to circumstances. Even if a drunkard were to will that all should follow him, it will not make drinking a good act. Why refer to such *will* in formulating a science intended to be kept above all personal and relative considerations?

that whatever is a universal rule of conduct is moral, and an exception to it immorality or sin. But this is only a partial truth. While it is true that man often seeks an exception to a moral rule due to selfishness, that is not the only source of an exception. On several occasions it is necessary to make such an exception from a quite unselfish standpoint. When confronted by a situation wherein two such rules mutually conflict, it becomes inevitable to violate one of them—i.e. to make an exception to it. In face of such a dilemma the right course is to judge properly the relative importance of the conflicting rules and violate the inferior one. Else, one may happen to follow the inferior and violate the superior one. In any case, the violation of one of them being inevitable, an exception will have to be made to it on that occasion. The responsibility for such an exception will lie, not on the person, but on the prevailing environment and the imperfection of human ethics. Almost every general rule of morality is sometime or other liable to such right exceptions. As a matter of fact, Kant "who at the very commencement of his work remarks that "nothing can possibly be conceived in the world, or even out of it, which can be called good without qualification, except a Good Will," ought himself to have recognised these justifiable exceptions to the common rules of conduct. But it appears that in the course of the argument he started regarding such rules too as unconditionally good, and therefore all exceptions to them as necessarily selfish and immoral.

Reply to Arjuna from the standpoint of Kant.

Were young Prahlāda, Dhruva and St Francis of Assisi not aware of the virtue in obeying one's father? Are we to dub the exceptions made by these great personalities to the common rules as but selfish? Indeed let us look at the situation in the Gītā itself. Kṛṣṇa, who himself assigns to non-violence a place in the virtues of the ideal man (see X/5, XIII/7, XVI/2, XVII/4) nevertheless advised Arjuna to wage a violent war on that occasion. But this does not mean that he denied the general importance of non-violence, or that he asked Arjuna to make a selfish exception to it; but

only that he laid down a just and necessary exception to it.¹ But see the reply that Arjuna would in all probability have received, had Kṛṣṇa viewed the problem from the angle of Kant. "Arjuna, you are asking about waging a war against your bloodrelations. But if in this world everyone starts fighting in this manner against his relations, all would perish, leaving none to continue this maxim of family war. Thus it is wrong to wage a war against one's own family. Therefore, Arjuna, do not fight." But as a matter of fact the idea of everyone opposing his own relations is itself irrelevant for the consideration of Arjuna's moral problem. That problem would arise only in the case of one who is unfortunate enough to have such evil-minded blood-relations as the Kauravas.

The oneness of Kant.

Perhaps it may be urged here that the said formula of Kant should be interpreted to mean, 'Do only that act which you may will any one else placed in your situation to do'. But with such an interpretation the very basic standpoint of a complete unconcern about the environment is abandoned, and it becomes obligatory for ethics to consider the circumstances of each person and act. Besides, the ethics of an action requires not only a consideration of the external environment but also that of the agent's particular temperament. It is not

1. Overlooking this, the advocates of extreme non-violence are only too eager to decry Kṛṣṇa and the Gītā. Here is a condemnation of the Gītā by Dr. Kagawa, the Japanese scholar, in his book *Love : The Law of Life*, "On reading the *Bhagavad Gītā*, the ancient sacred poem of India, I was moved to tears by the solemn soul-awakening revealed in the distressed appeal of Prince Arjuna, in agony at the futility of war. I was both elated and depressed upon learning that in ancient India that reeked with blood there was such a spirit as Arjuna, stirred to such holy anguish. The awakened soul is always sad.....Towards Kṛṣṇa's reply in the Gītā I have a strong feeling of indignation. With questionable theory derived from absolute spiritism, Kṛṣṇa instructs Prince Arjuna, who has awakened to sacred love upon the necessity for war.....I oppose this rash discourse of Kṛṣṇa. Every appeal against war has been objected to in similar fashion to this day." (pp. 59-60) The reader may take these observations for what they are worth ! Every advocate of extreme non-violence refuses or fails to distinguish between righteous unavoidable violence and unrighteous selfish violence.

impossible for men of different temperaments to have different duties in the same external environment. The duty of one with a natural talent for painting would be different in a given situation from that of another not so gifted. Therefore if we are to stick to the above direction of Kant we should have to interpret it further as follows: "Act only on that principle which you can will any one else to follow in your environment and with your temperament." But the reader will easily perceive that in the course of all this modification we have travelled far from the mere formal criterion of the non-egoistic attitude, to that of the act's *kārya* character relative to the environment.

It has so far been shown how Kant's first direction is inadequate for the determination of morality. In his second direction there is nothing objectionable so far as it goes. But even that throws light only on the initial tendency for action and not on its content—its rightness or wrongness. According to this formula action should always be motivated by the good of humanity (i.e. should be non-egoistic). There is nothing improper in it, and as shown above the Gītā also agrees with it. Kant's third direction provides his picture of an ideal society that follows the first two directions.

On the whole the moral law indicated by these three directions is of a one-sided nature. It considers only the purity of the motive. That in an ideal act the motive should be non-egoistic is maintained by the Gītā too. But even if it is accepted that the non-egoistic motive is independent of environment, it forms only one aspect of the ideal act. Besides that, there is the rightness of its actual content which is relative to the environment. The deliberative reason can determine the content of the act only after a proper consideration of the overall situation and possible consequences. While Bentham and Mill overlooked the purity of the motive by concentrating exclusively on the factual consequences, Kant on the contrary sought to disregard the environment along with the said consequences by concentrating solely on the purity of the motive. The Gītā seeks to duly recognise both these viewpoints.

Conduct in the context of environment.

The oneness of Kant's ethical standpoint can be easily realised if we consider the intimate relation between action and environment. As seen in the ninth chapter, the very origin of action lies in the environment and the individual's state of mind. The mere idea of the goal may be independent of the environment. But it is only when on viewing the prevailing environment in the light of that idea one feels a sense of dissatisfaction in his mind, that he is moved to action. Besides this, actually also the act is performed in the environment itself. Action being so intimately related to environment, any attempt to determine its morality without consideration of the environment can hardly hope to succeed.

Moreover, had the environment been uniform everywhere, its consideration could perhaps have been dispensed with in the ethics of action. But it is a matter of common knowledge that environment differs from man to man as also with time and place. In view of this, the very idea that the same specific rule of actual conduct should be universally applicable is a wrong one. And that being so, even if the universalisation of a right act is technically not possible, the responsibility for that will lie not on the act but on the uneven nature of the environment. It will be but proper to follow a different mode of conduct in a differing environment. Needless to add, while making any such variation due care should be taken that the motive is truly non-egoistic, and its content really conducive to the ultimate goal in the prevailing environment.

At whatever future time this environment would be the same everywhere, the behaviour of each towards all could perhaps be the same. Whatever is to happen in that ideal state, however, as long as there exists in this imperfect world such differences as the strong and the weak, the good man and the bad, the clever and the fool, so long would it be misleading to apply to every act the criterion of unconditional universalisation. The content of an act will have to be determined after a careful consideration of the particular person or society with which one has to deal and of the overall situation, and of course with an eye on the ultimate noble goal. True, the Gītā wants one to be

"alike towards a foe and a friend" (XII/18); but it only means that personally one should be equally selfless and desirous of their true good when dealing with friends or foes, the good or the bad, and not that he should exhibit in fact the same specific behaviour towards both of them irrespective of the actual consequences on all concerned. Therefore is it, that in absence of a proper consideration one may happen to perform a wrong act even though subjectively his attitude may be non-egoistic. It would not be proper, nor acceptable to the Gītā too, if with the mere inspiration of a high goal one performs an act without any concern for the possible consequences and justifies it in the name of his subjectively non-egoistic attitude.

Considering all this, the test that whatever can be acted upon by all is moral seems to be of inadequate worth. It may no doubt be proper to remind one that he is surrounded by persons likely to imitate his conduct, and that this ought to be duly considered when performing actions. But to say so is one thing, and to insist that one should only do what all others can do is another. The Gītā also refers in verse III/21 to the natural tendency of imitation in man; but does not judge the morality of an act by the possibility of such imitation. It directs that right acts should be performed, and the wrong avoided; so that the common man would follow the same. Kant on the contrary seeks to lay down a different and unwarranted proposition that the act which all can imitate is alone right. But herein he is confusing the ethical stand with the psychological. Even though it be possible for others to imitate an act, the question still remains whether they *should* do so. The *possibility* of that imitation is a psychological question, its *desirability* an ethical one. Adopting only the technical viewpoint Kant is overlooking the distinction between the two.¹

In short, though Kant has furnished a noble, certain and impersonal ideal for the motive of action, his moral law

1. Curiously enough, viewing ethics from the contrary angle, Mill too has made a confusion about desirability. In his proof of the hedonistic goal he urges that pleasure is desirable because it is desired. (*op. cit.*, pp. 52-53).

does not indicate what specific acts should be so performed. While not denying the originality of Kant's line of thought, therefore, critics have charged it with oneness. Jacobi caustically describes the 'good will' of Kant as "*the will that wills nothing*."¹ That 'good will' may be unconditionally good, but has no content;² it furnishes no information as to what that good will is about. While a motive characterised by such good will has an important place in the ethics of action, it would be incorrect to say that the moral standard can be derived only from it. And though there are writers who foist that on-sided view on the Gītā, the latter does not really advocate it.

CHAPTER XII

IDEAL ACTION ACCORDING TO GĪTĀ

Two fundamental problems of ethics.

The two main problems discussed in an exposition of ethics are about the nature of ideal action and ideal life. While not quite unconnected with each other, the two are not identical also. In respect of its scope the latter is broader than the former. While there are divergent views as to whether the ideal life should consist of the pursuit of action or the abandonment thereof, even the latter school has to formulate the definition of moral action. For, it also holds that the path to the final renunciation of action passes through the field of action itself; that the supreme state of actionlessness is possible only after the purification of the heart through the performance of good acts. Therefore even that school has to discuss the nature and manner of the acts to be performed prior to the attainment of that state. It is thus that those holding different views concerning the nature of ideal life can yet agree upon the character of ideal action. The two questions are therefore mutually separate, and we have to ascertain their answers according to the ethical views of the Gītā. Of them, let us take up the first in the present chapter.

Two chief essentials of the ideal act may be noted at the very outset--its pure motive and its rightness. It should originate in a pure motive and develop into a right content. Besides, while the non-egoistic attitude is the more widely known aspect of the agent's subjective purity, the latter also includes the absence of egotism. The last two chapters have introduced to us certain on-sided ethical schools emphasizing only some one of these essentials of the ideal act. The Gītā duly recognises all of them, though some writers are found to attribute to it the view that stresses merely the

1. See Jacobi's letter to Fichte (cited in Caird's *The Critical Philosophy of Kant*, Vol. II p. 216).

2. Indeed, because it has no content it can afford to be unconditionally good.

purity of the subjective attitude, dropping out directly or indirectly the rightness of the act.

Final end according to Gītā.

The final goal for the tendency to action, placed by the Gītā before humanity, is naturally in line with the general current of Indian philosophical thought. The Gītā has all along been regarded as the quintessence of such ancient Indian philosophical literature as the *upaniṣads*.¹ The final goal, as already said, is beyond logical proof. At the beginning it rests on respectful faith, and then on direct realisation in course of time. It is beyond the reach of mind and of language too.² It has been aptly said that one who claims to fully know it and starts giving a full verbal description of it does not know it in reality. It will therefore be vain to expect in the Gītā a full description of the same in so many words. The Gītā however indirectly suggests it by describing how one who has attained that state appears to others in this world. Besides, the Gītā also provides a rough idea of it in general terms to serve as preliminary basis for the seeker's faith.

From this point of view, the state of the final goal, which transcends the reason,³ has been referred to in the Gītā as *brahman*,⁴ 'the state of immortality',⁵ 'infinite eternal bliss',⁶ 'absence of return i.e. absolute liberation from the cycle of births and deaths',⁷ 'crossing the ocean of *māyā* (world-

1. Thus, e.g. "All the *upaniṣads* being as it were the milk-cows, Lord Kṛṣṇa the milkman and Arjuna the calf thirsting for the milk, the Gītā is verily the sublime immortal milk".—*Gītā-dhyānam*, verse 4. "The Gītā represents the three *vedas* as explained by Lord Kṛṣṇa himself to Arjuna, productive of supreme bliss and containing true metaphysical knowledge".—*Gītā-māhātmyam*, verse 9.

2. *Yato vāco nivartante aprāpya manasā saha* —Taittirīyopaniṣad.

3. *yo buddheḥ paratastu sah* (Gītā, III/42).

4. *Vide*, II/72, IV/31; V/6, 19, 20, 24, 25; VI/28; XIII/12; etc.

5. II/15; XIII/12; XIV/20, 27.

6. V/21; VI/27, 28; XIV/27.

7. II/51; V/17; XII/7; XIII/23; XIV/20.

process)',¹ 'the supreme destination',² 'the highest state',³ and 'the state of supreme tranquility'.⁴ This same state can also be termed as 'the union of the individual soul with the Universal Being',⁵ 'brahmi state',⁶ 'transcending the three qualities of *prakṛti*',⁷ or of 'the realisation of the spiritual identity of all beings'.⁸ The control of the senses, renunciation of the egoistic fruit of action, as also the pursuit of the good of all beings are some of the steps leading to this final goal. It is not something to be created anew, but rather means the realisation of the identity with that all-pervading eternal real being which has already been in existence since before, which never in the past was not, nor ever in the future shall cease to be.

Without a prior faith in this ultimate ideal, its direct experience or actual realisation is not possible.

śraddhāvāṁślabhate jñānam

talparaḥ saṁyatendriyaḥ

jñānam labdhvā parām śāntim

acireṇādhigacchati.

IV/39

ajñācāśraddadhānaśca

saṁśayātmā vinaśyati

nāyaṁ loko'sti na paro

na sukhaṁ saṁśayātmanah.

IV/40

'He obtains this knowledge who has mastered the senses. is absorbed in its earnest pursuit, and has faith. Having obtained the knowledge he forthwith attains the state of supreme tranquility—IV 39. (On the contrary) he who is ignorant,

1. VII/14.

2. VI/45; XIII/28.

3. II/59; III/19.

4. II/71; V/12, 29; VI/15; IX/31; XII/12; XVIII/62.

5. VI/31; VII/18, 19; XI/54, 55; XII/4, 8; XIV/19; XVIII/55, 65.

6. II/72.

7. II/45; XIV/20.

8. IV/35; VI/29.

lacks faith and turns a sceptic is ruined; such a sceptic enjoys neither this world nor the other, indeed finds no happiness whatever—IV/40". While this highest ideal advocated by the Gītā includes happiness, that is not its exclusive content; and besides, that happiness is quite different from the worldly pleasure. With such a final end in view all conflict between egoism and altruism ceases. Considering that the self within one is in essence the same that pervades everywhere, there naturally follows the non-opposition, nay identity, between one's own true good and that of others. Many an ethical system, with its viewpoint centred round mere worldly pleasure, is unable to explain conclusively as to why one should sacrifice his happiness for that of others. If it is improper for me to pursue my own worldly pleasure, how does the securing of the same for others become desirable? Is it that the same worldly pleasure which it is wrong for one to seek for himself, becomes morally good if secured by him for some one else, or by some one else for him? The Gītā however cuts the entire Gordian knot by resorting to the conception of the basic identity of all selves, and by the use of the expression 'good' (*hitam*) in place of mere 'pleasure' (*sukham*) whenever referring to altruism. Thus the Gītā aptly describes the ideal persons as *sarvaśāhātāhiteratāḥ* "absorbed in the pursuit of the good of the entire creation" (V/25, XII/4). A pursuit of the pleasure or good of others may require a sacrifice of my worldly pleasure, but a pursuit of their good would lead to the furtherance of my 'good' too. *The egoless attitude.*

The motive for the good act has of course to be non-egoistic; but apart from it, the Gītā also refers to the absence of the ego-sense on the part of the doer in performing the act. He may not regard himself as its author in the final sense. This egoless attitude has been already explained in the fifth chapter. Knowing that the acts result from the activity of the qualities of physical nature, the wise man does not claim their authorship for himself.

*praktiyeva ca karmāṇi
kriyamāṇāni sarvaśaḥ*

*yaḥ paśyati tathātmānam
akartāraṁ sa paśyati.* XIII/29

"He verily realises the truth—knows in the real sense—who realises that all acts are done by *prakṛti* (physical nature) itself, and that (in essence) the self is no doer—performs no action". But one led away by the ego-sense regards himself as the author thereof. Due to that even an altruistic person is at times found to grow inwardly more and more vain. The Gītā seeks to save the doer of ideal action from it. It calls upon us to surrender all our action to God.

*yatkaroṣi yadaśnasi
yajjuhosi dadāsi yat
yattapasyasi kaunteya IX/27*
*ye tu sarvāṇi karmāṇi
tattkurusva madarpanam.*
*mayi samnyasya matparaḥ
ananyenaiva yogena XII/6*
*cetasā sarvakarmāṇi
mām dhyāyanta upāsate.*
*mayi samnyasya matparaḥ
buddhiyogamupāśṛitya XVIII/57*
macittāḥ satatam bhava.

"Whatever you do, whatever you taste (enjoy), whatever oblation you offer, whatever austerities you practise, surrender that all, Arjuna, unto me—IX/27. Those who renounce all acts (surrender their fruit as also authorship) unto me, are devoted to me and worship me through equanimous meditation exclusively concentrated in me—XII/6 (are forthwith liberated by me—XII/7). Inwardly renouncing all acts unto me, with devotion for me, and resorting to *buddhiyoga* or the *yoga* of equanimous reason, concentrate your mind for all time in me—XVIII/57."

'Niskāma' and besides 'kārya'.

The ideal act is thus subjectively pure—non-egoistic and egoless. However, this is but one characteristic of it.

Besides that, it must be right too. The rightness and wrongness of action depends on its content. It is one thing to be impelled to action by the idea of a non-egoistic goal, and another to fix an act that will in fact lead to it.

Neither in theory nor in practice does the non-egoistic action quite coincide with right action. Not all egoistic acts are wrong. If a man though prompted by selfish considerations performs an act which in its content is on the whole good, it will be an egoistic and yet right act. Not all selfish acts are wicked and heinous. Even selfishness has its degrees. A teacher serving for salary is prompted by selfishness and yet performs a right act; but the act of selfish stealing is a wrong one. Of course, as seen in the discussion of the theory of utilitarianism, this would not justify an exclusive emphasis on the rightness of action, with the motive as wholly irrelevant to the moral evaluation of an act. While the egoistically prompted right act is comparatively better than a wrong one, it does not thereby become the ideal act.

At the same time, an act though non-egoistic may not be a right one. An act though unselfish in motive can yet be wrong on account of its erroneous content due to confusion of the deliberative reason. Arjuna himself was non-egoistic at heart, and was yet suffering from such confusion. The mere non-egoistic attitude of the heart is no sure guarantee of the rightness of action; otherwise, there would have been no need for the Gīta's celebrated remark "very intricate indeed is the course (nature) of action".¹ It is necessary for one to deliberate to the best of his ability as to which specific act would be proper in the particular setting of time, place and circumstances. The father who in one situation may punish the child for the latter's good may have to act differently in another situation to achieve the same goal. Being performed in different circumstances, the factual diversity of such acts would be but conducive to their rightness.

Some criteria of rightness : intuition, conduct of the great, testimony.

How to determine the rightness and wrongness of speci-

1. *gāhānā karmāṇa gāthā*, IV/17.

fic acts ? It is obviously a very important question in the theory of action. Four possible criteria or standards may be considered in this connection. Personal intuition; imitation of the great; testimony i.e. reliance on such authoritative sources as the scriptures; and lastly, the inferential standard of dis- criminative deliberation over the consequences in the back- ground of the prevailing circumstances.

Out of these, the first has not received much importance at the hands of the Gīta's author. He does not direct that one be equipped with the non-egoistic attitude one should un- hesitatingly follow the decision given immediately by one's own conscience without any reflective deliberation. Of course when there is no adequate basis for reflective delibe- ration and at the same time no such master to guide as Lord Kṛṣṇa, the good man may without losing heart act on critical occasions under the guidance of his inner promptings. Re- garded thus, this view though not explicitly mentioned by the Gīta's author need not be taken as objectionable to him. Though an important source for the ascertainment of the final goal, intuition is the drowning man's last straw for the determi- nation of the rightness and wrongness of specific acts.

The next standard is the conduct of the great. Even this does not appear to have been regarded as of specific significance by the Gīta's author. There is no doubt a men- tion of it in the third canto in the following form : "Whatever a great man does, so do the other (common) men; the stan- dard set by him is followed by the masses" (III/21). Neverthe- less, even this verse does not so much refer to the desirability of imitation, as to the common man's natural tendency towards it. The principal idea therein is not to direct the masses to imitate the leaders, but to caution the latter that they are likely to be imitated by the masses. Obviously, therefore, this does not indicate as to how the great themselves are to make their own choice of action. Besides, it is impossible for the common man to find for every contingency a precedent in the conduct of the great. It is also not always free from dispute as to who should be regarded as truly great, in case of a conflict between the conduct of two great men. In short, while the conduct of the great is useful to a certain extent as

a provisional guidance for the common man, it can not be the principal moral standard.

The third criterion, viz. the testimony of authority, includes the scriptures, religious treatises and the like respected in a society. Looking realistically at the serious confusion that would result if each common individual is granted in the matter of the right and wrong the liberty to follow his own promptings, the Gītā has no doubt advocated for the masses the general desirability of following the scriptural injunctions. At the conclusion of the sixteenth canto Kṛṣṇa observes :

yaḥ śāstravidhimuṣṛjya

vartate kāmakārataḥ

na sa siddhimavāpnōti

na sukhaṁ na parām gatim.

XVI/23

tasmācchāstram pramāṇam te

kāryākāryavyavasthitaḥ

jñātṛā śāstravidhānoktaṁ

karma kartumihārhasi.

XVI/24

"He who violates the injunctions of the scriptures and behaves under the promptings of egoistic attachment attains neither perfection, nor happiness, nor the supreme goal—XVI/23. Therefore, let the scripture be your standard for determining what is right and what is not. Knowing the action laid down in the scripture you should act accordingly in this world—XVI-24." In the seventeenth canto the demoniacal practice of austerities is said to be one 'not sanctioned by scriptures' (XVII/5); and the Gītā also adds that the sacrifice of the *satva* type is 'in accordance with the scriptural procedure' (XVII/11), while that of *tamas* type is not (XVII/13).

The chief criterion is deliberation over consequences; meaning of 'karmaphalatvāgā'.

But though the Gītā thus refers to scriptural testimony for the determination of rightness, it does not follow that it advocates mere blind faith in it or a sort of dictatorship,

social or religious. The final criterion of rightness remains the discrimination over the consequences of an act in the light of the prevailing situation. There is a widely prevalent misunderstanding that the Gītā eschews deliberation over the consequences of action or at any rate treats it as unimportant. It is necessary to refute this idea. No consistent theory of ethics is possible without the due consideration of consequences; and no voluntary action is possible without a desire in some form or other for consequences. We have already seen the futility of Kant's attempt to construct the science of ethics from a standpoint eschewing the consideration of consequences. It is indeed very surprising that the Gītā though not committing that error is nevertheless charged with that view, and that too by way of its praise !

The important phrase "abandonment of the 'fruit' of action" occurring in the Gītā seems obviously to have caused the curious misunderstanding that its author is opposed to all deliberation over consequences. The Gītā has time and again emphasized the significance of such abandonment, and its exponents have almost invariably been tempted to interpret the word *phalam* ('fruit') as equivalent to the 'consequences' of action. But this equation is not correct. The important fact is that the forbidden 'fruit' of action does not connote all the consequences of an act, but only a specified variety thereof. No tendency to action would be possible without a consideration—nay desire—of the consequences. Not only the 'wish' for the actual deed (its content) but even the initial general 'desire' for action is relative to the consequences. A minute scrutiny of even what is known as the non-egoistic motive will bring out the desire for consequences involved therein. The egoistic desire not being the only variety of desire, even though that is absent in the non-egoistic attitude another type of desire can be possible therein. With a feeling of dissatisfaction in the prevailing situation one is inclined to action so as to alter it, that is to say, for bringing about certain consequences in that situation. This is the preliminary general consideration of consequences. Thereafter he begins so think about the actual content of the act, when the consideration and desire of consequences become all the more

apparent. He thus determines the specific act to be performed. From beginning to end (voluntary) action is related to the consideration and desire of consequences.

It is therefore hardly possible to keep out the desire for consequences from the ethics of action; nor does the Gītā advocate any such stand. It advises an abandonment, absence of desire, or non-attachment, not with respect to all the consequences of action but only its *phalam* i.e. 'fruit'. Now the *phalam* of action means only the egoistic consequences, i.e. those concerning the agent's personal pleasures and pains. The act however also results in other consequences. They include those affecting others; as also those affecting oneself but in respect of the 'good' instead of 'pleasure'. While performing any act there should be no desire for egoistic consequences. The Gītā, however, does not say that one should entertain no concern for even the other consequences. It is but proper to be impelled to action with the motive of bringing about such consequences as are conducive to the 'good' of oneself as also that of others, and to be careful in that respect while performing the act.

It will be seen that whenever the Gītā speaks of the abandonment of the 'fruit' of action, it refers only to the personal consequences. In this connection the following celebrated verse naturally deserves attention :

*karmanyevādhikāraste
mā phaleṣu kadācana
mā karmaphalāheturbhūr
mā te saṅgostvakarmaṇi.* II/47

"Your right extends only to (the performance of) action and never to the 'fruit'. Let not the 'fruit' of action be your motive; (but at the same time) do not also adopt the state of inaction (even though renouncing the wish for the 'fruit' do not on that account give up all action itself)". Now, the 'fruit' of action which has here been directed to be given up can only be of the selfish type. The above verse can certainly not be intended to forbid the performance of action even with the motive of such consequences as self-purification,

attainment of Liberation, good of all beings, guidance of humanity, establishment of righteousness, or service of the nation. If this verse is taken to imply the abandonment of the desire for all consequences whatever, there would be no escape from 'the state of inaction'. But precisely because it is not so, the Gītā directs in the last quarter of the verse, that even when giving up the longing for personal consequences it will not be proper to abandon action itself, as there are other consequences available to serve as its motive.

It is to be further noted that though this verse contains a disapproval of the fruit i.e. the personal consequences of action, even that refers only to the *desire* thereof and not its *acceptance* as such. The remark "your right never extends to the fruit" occurring in the second quarter, can convey two meanings. To say that a man is not entitled to a thing may mean that he has no right to himself ask for (desire) it; or secondly, that not only has he no right to ask for it, but even if it were to come to him unsought he should not accept or retain it. If an employee claims a higher post, he may be told that he has no right as such to it. But that would not mean that he has no right to accept it even if offered by the government itself. But to say that one has no right to another's wife means not only that he should not seek her, but also that if she herself comes or is brought to him she is not acceptable for him.

The question therefore arises, whether the remark that man has no right to the 'fruit' of action means only that he should not himself seek the personal consequences; or further, that he should actually refuse even such personal consequences as may naturally result from his action. The point has been cleared in the third quarter of the verse. All that the Gītā insists is that the 'fruit' of action should not be made the *motive* thereof; that one should not be prompted to action just for its sake. But it does not insist on the unnatural direction that if the main desired consequences being non-egoistic, the agent also receives from the performance of a right act some personal pleasure he should avoid even that. The reader may now better appreciate our previous observation that the Gītā disapproves only the attachment for pleasure but not the

pleasant experiences themselves¹. While it is wrong to eat only for the sake of the pleasures of palate, there is no reason to feel ashamed or degraded if one experiences pleasure while taking the necessary nourishment for the body. It is but the course of nature and is in fact an indication of satisfactory physical health. It is worth noting that in the Gītā itself, after the clear enunciation of the gospel of non-attachment, Kṛṣṇa asks Arjuna to wage that righteous war as a matter of duty, vanquish the enemy, and then as its natural consequence to enjoy the prosperous kingdom (XI/33).²

Restricted scope of 'phalam'.

While the above verse thus disapproves only the egoistic consequences—and there too only their being regarded as the motive—one often finds the word *phalam* being extended to cover all the consequences of action, and thus a quite unscientific and impossible view being attributed to the Gītā. To eschew all consideration of consequences would render voluntary action itself impossible. Any other activity can only be of the nature of a mere physiological movement, mechanical response, or what is known as reflex action. According to the Gītā itself, the Lord incarnates himself in this world in

1. The following saying of the founder of cynicism, an ancient western school of extreme asceticism, is wellknown: 'I would rather be mad than feel pleasure'. The Gītā does not hold that view. A torture of the body, advocated by some extreme ascetic schools, is one thing; and the bodily suffering endured by noble persons for the world's good is another. The Gītā dismisses the former thus: "Know those soulless (stupid) men to be of demoniacal will, who torment the physical elements constituting their body as also myself that dwells within the body." (XVII/6).

2. Compare Ruskin (essay on Work): "All healthy people like their dinners, but their dinners is not the main object of their lives. So all healthy-minded people like making money—ought to like it, and to enjoy the sensation of winning it: but the main object of their life is not money; it is something better than money. A good soldier, for instance, mainly wishes to do his fighting well. He is glad of his pay—very properly so, and justly grumbles when you keep him ten years without it—still, his main notion of life is to win battles, not to be paid for winning them. So of doctors. They like fees no doubt,—ought to like them; yet if they are brave and well-educated, the entire object of their lives is not fees. They, on the whole, desire to cure the sick."

different ages, with the clear desire to bring about such consequences as 'the destruction of the evil-doers, protection of the good and the establishment of righteousness' (IV/8), which on the above too wide interpretation would have to be included in the *phalam* of action.

With the restricted sense of the *phalam* in mind, one can gather the true import of the following further references to the 'fruit' of action. Verse II/49 declares those as of low nature who are prompted (to action) by the motive of the 'fruit'. There also the reference must be taken to being prompted to action by egoistic considerations. Or else, even the Lord himself who incarnates and acts in the above said manner would have to be classed as of low nature. And so too the noble souls absorbed in the pursuit of Liberation, Perfection, or the good of entire creation.¹ The reader can now also see the precise nature of the 'fruit' which the person of equanimous reason is said in verse II/51 to renounce. In verse IV/14 Kṛṣṇa declares that he entertains no longing for the fruit of action. There too he is referring to nothing but the egoistic consequences, for he has already expressed in the eighth verse in the same canto his consideration for those consequences of his action that are beneficial for humanity.

Let us here also consider the following verses:

tyaktvā karmaphalāsāṅgam
nityatṛpto nirāśrayaḥ
karmayabhihṛavṛtto'pi
nāiva kīṛtīkaroti sah. IV/20

1. Commenting on verse II/49 Tilak says: "Those who perform action fall into two categories. Those looking to the *phala*, e.g., to the idea as to how many people and to what extent would be happy thereby; and those with an equanimous and non-egoistic reason, quite unconcerned about any consequence that may chance to result from the act. Out of them the *phalataṭṭāḥ* i.e., those performing action with their eyes towards its *phala* are declared in this verse as morally *kṛpāṇa* i.e., of low nature, while those acting with equanimous reason as higher." (Op. cit. Chap. XII, Para 6). In this sense even those acting with altruistic motives would have to be declared as *kṛpāṇa*.

“He who is ever content (having attained permanent contentment, not of the ephemeral type of sense-pleasures), does not depend (for such contentment) on any person or object, and has renounced all attachment for the act as also its ‘fruit’, even while performing action (verily) does not act.”¹

*anāśritah karmaphalam
kāryam karma karoti yah
sa sanyāsī ca yogi ca
na niragūṇa cākṛiṇaḥ.*

VI/1

“He is the (true) *sanyāsī* and the *yogi* too, who performs the right act without any personal attachment for the action and its fruit; but (he is) not (the true *sanyāsī*) who (merely) abandons (the ritualistic acts like) the lighting of sacrificial fire, nor (is he the true *yogi* who (merely) sits still restraining (such processes as) the functioning of his heart”.² It will be seen that herein too is advocated an abandonment of only such consequences as relate to personal pleasures. And because there is still left the desire for the consequences of the unselfish variety, such a man abandoning the ‘fruit’ can yet be impelled to voluntary action. Nevertheless as he does nothing for his personal interest and is besides devoid of the egosense concerning the authorship of action, it may be said that even while performing such action he virtually does nothing (so as to put himself in bondage).

That the ‘fruit’ forbidden by the Gītā is only of the selfish type can be demonstrated in one more way also. As already seen in the third chapter *kāma* i.e. egoistic attachment includes only the desires concerning personal pleasures and pains. Now let us look at the mutual relation bet-

1. Some writers take *karmaphalam* as a single term and interpret *karmaphalāśaṅgam* as attachment for the fruit of action. On the other hand Sankara and his followers disjoin *karma* and *phala*, and speak of the separate attachment for each of them. The present writer prefers the latter view. While the former interpretation indicates only the non-egoistic attitude, the second brings out the egoless attitude as well.

2. In interpreting *akṛiṇaḥ* here, I have followed Madhusūdana.

ween it and the fruit of action indicated clearly in the following verse:

*yuktah karmaphalam tyaktvā
śāntimāpnoti naiṣṭhikīm
ayuktah kāmakāreṇa
phale sakto nibadhyate.*

V/12

“The self-controlled person having renounced the ‘fruit’ of action attains supreme tranquility; (but) he who is without such control being prompted by *kāma*, remains attached to the fruit and falls in bondage”. Egoistic attachment does not include the desire for Liberation, altruism, or the good of all beings; and when we see it stated in the above verse that it is due to egoistic attachment that a man develops a longing for the ‘fruit’, it clearly follows that the said desires are not included in the ‘fruit’. In the eighteenth canto the Gītā again observes:

*anīṣṭamīṣṭam miśraṁ ca
trividham karmanah phalam
bhavatyatyāginām pretya
na tu sanyāsīnām kvacit.*

XVIII/12

“Undesirable (unpleasant), desirable (pleasant) and mixed, such is the threefold ‘fruit’ of action which a person who has not practised abandonment (of attachment) secures (i.e. can not avoid) after his death (if not already in his lifetime); but the *sanyāsī* is never visited (bound) by it.” It is obvious that the expression ‘fruit’ is here intended for the consequences in the form of personal pleasures and pains which the agent himself has to pass through. There is no reason to connect with his death those consequences of his action which affect others. The man of renunciation (*sanyāsī*) who performs right action without the least desire for personal consequences (vide VI/1) is obviously not required to experience the ‘fruit’ mentioned in this verse.

Consideration of consequences by Kṛṣṇa himself.

It has thus been seen that the ‘fruit’ of action disapproved by the Gītā consists only of egoistic consequences. Let us now

look at those references in the Gītā where the discriminative deliberation over the (impersonal) consequences has been clearly advocated. A study of the point from both these aspects will remove the widely prevalent impression that in the ideal act according to the Gītā all consideration of consequences is eschewed.

As shown above the Lord has explained in verses IV/7, 8,9, the underlying idea behind his own incarnations and actions based on the consideration of consequences. But at another place too he has referred to the same point by way of self-justification. In the third canto he first points to complete absence of personal considerations in him in the following words. "Arjuna, there is nothing in all the three worlds necessary to be done by me as such (for my own sake); nor is there anything that I lack and have to obtain. Nevertheless I do perform action" (III/22).¹ Thereafter explaining as to why he nevertheless remains performing action Kṛṣṇa observes:

*yadi hyaham na varteyam
jātu karmanyatandritaḥ
mama vartmānuvartante
manuṣyāḥ pārtha sarvaśaḥ. III/23*

*utsīdeyurime lokā
na kuryām karma cedaham
sankarasya ca kartā syām
upahanyāmimāḥ prajāḥ. III/24*

"Arjuna, if I do not continue to act without idleness, men would imitate me in every respect (and abandon all action) III/23. If I cease to act, these worlds would be ruined; and I shall be responsible for causing *sankara* (licentious intermixture)² as also the destruction of these peoples—III/24" What

1. See also verse IV/14 : 'I entertain no longing for the fruit of action.'

2. For, on the Lord withdrawing his paternal attention from the world and turning indifferent towards the happenings therein, the evil forces will come to the surface, all moral restrictions being thrown to the winds.

is all this but a consideration of the non-egoistic objective consequences of one's conduct? Had Kṛṣṇa's view really been that once the reason is non-egoistic one need not consider in any manner the consequences of his conduct, he would not have himself thus sympathetically considered the consequences of his own conduct on the humanity at large.

From the same angle Kṛṣṇa gives the following advice to Arjuna:

*lohasaṅgrahamevāpi
sampaśyankartumarhasi. III/20*

".....Even in view of the proper guidance of the society (the good of humanity, maintenance of world order) you ought to be performing (your duly determined) action". And further reminds him: "Whatever a great man does, so do the other (common) men; the standard set by him is followed by the masses" (III/21). The central idea behind these verses—indeed behind the entire third canto—is to advocate not merely the performance of action as against its total abandonment, but also the performance of right action as against the wrong one. Kṛṣṇa's direction to Arjuna is to the effect that in view of the possibility of the common man imitating him, the consequences of his conduct would affect not only himself but others too, and that this deserved due consideration.

The same necessary in acts of charity.

Let us however go a step further and look at the necessity of reflective deliberation over the prevailing environment and possible consequences further advocated in the Gītā:

*dātavyamiti yaddānam
dīyate' nupakāraṇe
deśe kāle ca pātre ca
taddānam sātत्वikam smṛtam. XVII/20*

"That charity is known as of the *satva* category which is given to a deserving donee at the proper time and place, with the attitude that the charity is one's duty and without any idea of return". As stated in this excellent definition, it is

not enough that the charity of the noble (*satva*) type is offered with a pure i.e. non-egoistic attitude; besides that, it must be given at the proper place and time and to a deserving recipient.¹ While the first half of the verse refers to the pure subjective attitude, the second to the consideration of the consequences and the prevailing environment. For, after all, how else except by such a consideration is the suitability of the time, place and recipient to be determined in the last resort? It will be hardly possible to determine merely by the standard of any scriptural testimony the suitability of all the persons, institutions, and circumstances which one continually comes across in ever new forms. A charity ought to be given only after due consideration of its likely consequences on the recipient, other concerned persons and the society at large. Otherwise, no matter how non-egoistic, and 'without any expectation of return' its offering may be from the donor's personal point of view, it will be an improper one, or as the Gītā puts it, of the *tāmasa* category. That is the clear idea in the above and two succeeding verses and shows the place of the non-egoistic attitude and the rightness of the act in the account of ideal action.²

Therefore when in the Gītā the *rājasa* charity is said to be one 'given with the expectation of fruit' (XVII/21), or a *rājasa* sacrifice is said to be 'aimed at the fruit' (XVII/12), or the *rājasa* will is said to be 'desirous of the fruit' (XVIII/34), the reference at all such places is only to the personal

1. This necessity of considering the propriety of the time, place and recipient of a charitable act is again stressed in the *Mahābhārata* in *Sānti-parva*, Chapter 309, verses 12 to 16. The observations there contain one more feature; namely that the thing to be donated must have been obtained by the donor himself 'by pure means' (*śubhena vidhinā labdhām*).

2. The Gītā lays down the following excellent order in the acts of charity. The non-egoistic and deserving charity is of the *sāttvika* category (XVII/20); the deserving but egoistic one of the *rājasa* (XVII/21). But that given to a non-deserving recipient, whether with the egoistic or non-egoistic attitude, belongs to the *tāmasa* category (XVII/22). Of course in the last variety the egoistic one will be all the more inferior than the non-egoistic one; but the non-egoistic non-deserving charity is without doubt to be classed under the *tāmasa* category.

egoistic consequences. Similarly, when the persons practising penance of the *satva* type are said to be those 'not desirous of the fruit' (XVII/17), the idea is not to disapprove the desire for all consequences whatever. In the very next verse (XVII/18) while explaining the desire for 'fruit' involved in the *rājasa* penance it is said to be performed 'with a view to gain reception, honour, or homage' (for oneself)²; which clarifies the precise nature of the 'fruit' the desire for which is absent in the former penance.

Consideration of consequences in the classification of action.

The above however referred only to the specific acts of charity and penance. Here is now the Gītā's classification of action itself, involving its intimate relation with the consideration of consequences.

nijataṁ saṅgarahitam-

arāgadveṣataḥ kṛtam

aphalapreṣṇā karma

yattatsātvikamucyate.

XVIII/23

yattu kāmepṣunā karma

sāhanikāreṇa vā punaḥ

kṛiyate bahulāyāsaṁ

tadrājasa mudāhṛtam.

XVIII/24

"That act is known as *sātvika* which being duly fixed (or obligatory) i.e. right is performed without any desire for the 'fruit' and without a sense of attachment, attraction or hate XVIII/23. But that act is deemed *rājasa* which the doer performs with a laborious effort, and under the influence of egoistic attachment or the ego-sense—XVIII/24." These are the definitions of the *sātvika* and *rājasa* acts. Now here is the nature of the *tāmasa* action:

1. *aphalātāṅkṣibhiḥ.*

2. *satkāramānāpajārtham.*

anubandham kṣayaṁ hinisān
anapekṣya ca pauraṣaṁ
mohādārābhyaṭe karma
yattattāmasamucyate. XVIII/25

“An action commenced through *moha*, without a proper consideration of the pros and cons (consequences), possible loss, violence, one's own capacity etc, is known as of the *tāmas* category.”

In the above definitions the doer of the *sāttvika* action is said to be ‘without any desire for the fruit’; the implication of which is clearly indicated by the words ‘without a sense of attachment, attraction or hate’ occurring in the same verse. In this type of action the doer is without the desire not for all the consequences as such, but only those (constituting the *phalam* i.e. ‘fruit’) which are of the personal type, arising out of egoistic attachment. The same is again indicated by the expression ‘under the influence of egoistic attachment’ in the definition of the *rājasa* action. The above definition of the *sāttvika* action thus disapproves only the selfish consequences.

Further, coming to action of the *tāmasa* type the Gītā clearly defines it as one performed without a due consideration of consequences. The very opening word therein (XVIII/25) is indicative of consequences in general. Besides, the verse also stresses the consideration of the monetary or other loss, injury caused to others by one's acts, and the like. A failure to duly consider all this is said to indicate the *tāmasa* character. It is interesting to find writers who elsewhere eschew the consideration of consequences in the Gītā's theory of action quietly surrendering to and recommending the same in their explanation of this verse. Thus Tilak who on the one hand says: ‘It is true that the discriminative consideration of the external consequences of an act is indicative of prudence and farsightedness. But farsightedness is not the same thing as morality’¹ (thus deriding the deliberation over consequences

1. *Op. cit.* chap. XII para 13.

from the ethical point of view), himself observes in his comments on the above verse: “It will be clear from the twentyfifth verse that the Gītā does not mean that once the wish for *phala* is given up, one is free to act in any manner he likes without looking to the pros and cons or any discriminative deliberation. For it has been definitely stated in the twentyfifth verse that an act done without considering the *anubandha* and *phala* is *tāmasa*, not *sāttvika*.”² In fact, it will be seen that the above definition of *tāmasa* action is almost entirely based on the nature of its consequences. A scrutiny of the definitions will show that egoistic action, if of the right type, is classed as *rājasa* and not *tāmasa*. It is only when an act is wrong in view of its consequences not based on proper deliberation, that it is classed as *tāmasa*, whether subjectively it is egoistic or otherwise. The special feature of that type of action, as clearly stated in verse XVIII/25, is that it is the outcome of *moha*, not necessarily *kāma*, which is stated to be the speciality of the *rājasa* type. The reader need not of course be reminded here of the important distinction between *kāma* and *moha* discussed at length in the First Part.

The Gītā thus includes the consideration of consequences in the very account of the nature of action. Moreover, even in explaining the threefold classification of reason too, the Gītā has laid stress on its capacity for a correct determination of the right and wrong.

pravṛtīm ca nivṛtīm ca
kāryākārye bhayābhaye
bandham mokṣaṁ ca yā veti
buddhiḥ sā pārtha sāttvikī. XVIII/30

yayā dharmamadharmam ca
kāryaṁ cākāryameva yā
ayathāvatprajānāni
buddhiḥ sā pārtha rājasi. 31

adharmam dharmamiti yā
manyate tamasāvṛtā
sarvārthān viparītānśca
buddhiḥ sā pārtha tāmasī. 32

“Arjuna, that reason is of the *sattva* category which takes a correct decision regarding such matters as *pravṛtti* i.e. the attitude of performing activity and *nivṛtti* i.e. the retirement therefrom, the right and wrong, (the proper object of) fear and fearlessness, the nature of bondage and Liberation—XVIII/30. That reason, Arjuna, which does not enable a correct understanding of the righteous and the unrighteous (the good and bad), the right and wrong, is of the *rajās* category—31. Arjuna, that reason which being enveloped by *tamas* actually regards the wrong itself as right and interprets everything in a perverse manner is of the *tamas* category—32”. Without speaking merely of the standard of scriptural testimony, this contains an appropriate reference to the capacity of the reason to duly determine the right and wrong. That determination has to be done by the human reason after a discriminative deliberation in the light of the particular place, time and situation. It would of course involve a consideration of the consequences of action. The Gītā does not say that the reason which unfailingly follows the scriptures is of the *sattva* type.

Gītā's concept of ideal action.

Taking into consideration our discussion so far, the Gītā's concept of ideal action may thus be stated.

THE IDEAL ACT originates in a pure motive. The agent is prompted to perform it by a non-selfish goal leading to the 'good'—either the direct idea of Liberation or some secondary one ancillary to it. Of course such act is non-egoistic, its agent being indifferent towards his personal pleasures and pains. Besides, his attitude is also devoid of the ego-sense, not taking the entire authorship to himself. And the third feature is that the act is of the right type; that is to say its consequences are good, those really leading in the prevailing circumstances to the abovesaid goal.

Out of the triple aspects of the ideal action, viz. its non-egoistic character, egoless attitude and rightness of its content, it is necessary from a comparative point of view to assign the foremost place to the last of these. It is true that the ideal act ought to be non-egoistic. But, generally speak-

ing, rather than the performance of non-egoistic wrong action, or even the mere non-performance of any action, it is better to secure the performance of the egoistically done right act. It is in this light that we have to look at the following observations in the Gītā :

<i>saktāḥ karmanyavidvāṁso</i>	
<i>yathā kurvāṇi bhārata</i>	
<i>kuryādvidvāṁstathāsaktas-</i>	III/25
<i>ckīrṣṇulokasaṅgraham.</i>	
<i>na buddhibhedaṁ janayed-</i>	
<i>ajñānāṁ karmasaṅginām</i>	
<i>joṣayet sarvakarmāṇi</i>	26
<i>vidvānyuktaḥ samācaran.</i>	
<i>prakṛterguṇasammūdhāḥ</i>	
<i>sajjante guṇakarmasu</i>	
<i>tānakṛtsnavido mandān</i>	29
<i>kṛtṇavimna vicālayet.</i>	

“Arjuna, as the ignorant act with attachment towards the actions, so too should the learned, desiring to properly guide the masses, act but without the attachment (III/25). Let not the learned unsettle the reason (minds) of the ignorant who are attached to actions. The person with knowledge performing all (his) acts with the equanimous (*yoga*) attitude should get the same (performance of right action) willingly done by the masses (III/26). The ignorant beguiled by the qualities of physical nature get attached to the qualities and actions. Let not the man with full knowledge, however, unsettle the minds of those dull men of incomplete knowledge (so as to swerve them from their performance of right action) (III/29)”. It is better that the common man continues to perform his respective duty albeit with attachment, rather than that he altogether gives up the duty itself. The attempt should of course continue to replace the attitude of attachment by one of non-attachment. But even so the necessary performance of right action should not be given up, which is thus of the first importance from the individual as well as the social points of view.

Arjuna himself had turned non-egoistic at the moment, and yet out of intellectual confusion was taking a right act as a wrong one and therefore seeking to abandon it. It was to turn him to the right act of that war that Kṛṣṇa related the Gītā gospel. He directed Arjuna to perform it with a non-egoistic and egoless attitude; and if that was not possible, to do it even with an egoistic viewpoint, but in no case to altogether avoid it. Hence, even while passing through various topics in the course of the dialogue, Kṛṣṇa did not let his mind swerve from his central purpose, constantly insisting on the direction 'therefore, Arjuna, fight this war'. It is clear that rightness is the first essential aspect of ideal action according to the Gītā; and the non-egoistic and egoless attitudes would grace an act only if first accompanied by rightness. A wrong action accompanied by any such attitude would not cease to be wrong. Of course this does not mean that the non-egoistic and egoless aspects are quite insignificant, or that ideal action is possible without them.

CHAPTER XIII

GĪTĀ'S RECONCILIATION OF SCRIPTURE AND REASON

Limited significance of scriptures.

As shown in the previous chapter, what the Gītā forbids is only one's being motivated by personal consequences, and not the desire of other consequences; the latter being in fact regarded as essential in the determination of morality. True, the Gītā also relies at places on the testimony of scriptural procedure. But such respect for the scripture is not in opposition to the deliberative reason, or in the nature of a blind faith. It is at bottom based on the reflective deliberation over the consequences. Of course not all individuals have their reason raised to the pure level. It is therefore only proper that for the safe guidance of the common men whose reason has not attained the *sattva* level, the moral and intellectual leaders of the society should lay down some general rules of conduct after a due consideration of the overall circumstances and consequences of diverse lines of action. Besides, a sense of unity is also essential for the maintenance of the society. From that point of view a certain uniformity is necessary in the social behaviour of individuals. It is therefore but desirable that an individual should at times agree to set aside his personal ideas and inconveniences, and follow the general rules of conduct established in the society provided they do not conflict with fundamental moral principles. When such rules get a systematic form, there is born a scripture of conduct. Every society has such scriptures, written or unwritten.

Scriptures finally based on consideration of consequences.

These rules do not come into being all of a sudden, but are the result of long experience. They gradually assume a definite form in the social life in the light of the experiences of different acts in diverse circumstances. Even if the author-

ship of such a scripture is attributed to a particular person, it usually means only that he gave a collective systematic form to the usages, customs and traditions prevalent in the society since long, making a careful selection where necessary. That is the implication of crediting certain scholars with the authorship of the *smṛiti* works in ancient Indian literature. Such a person too performs this function of codification or organisation on the basis of a discriminative deliberation over the consequences of diverse acts. Speaking of the fourfold classification of society the author of the Gītā declares through the mouth of Lord Kṛṣṇa:

cāturvarṇyam mayāśṛṣṭam
guṇakarmavibhāgaśah.......IV/13

“The fourfold social order was introduced by me in accordance with the distinctions of aptitudes and functions.” After a due consideration of such factors as the social environment, necessity of maintaining the social order, different qualities and aptitudes of different individuals, the consequences of diverse acts, and the like, this arrangement was laid down for the stabilisation of the Indian society. This allocation of duties according to the respective aptitudes is thus explained in the eighteenth canto: “Arjuna, the respective functions of the priest (*brāhmaṇa*), warrior (*kṣatriya*), trader (*vaiśya*) and servant (*śūdra*) classes have been separately classified in accordance with the qualities and aptitudes following from the bent of their natures—XVIII/41. The functions of the priest following from his nature consist of mental serenity, self-restraint, penance, purity, forgiveness, straightforwardness, the acquiring of knowledge, the realisation of knowledge, and faith in spiritual matters—42. The functions of the warrior following from his nature consist of bravery, illustriousness, steadfastness of will, resourcefulness, non-desertion of the battlefield, philanthropy, and the capacity to govern—43. The functions of the trader, following from his nature, consist of agriculture, cattle-preservation and commerce. The functions of the servant following from his nature consist of service—44”.

If every member of the society sincerely performs his respective functions, the social order is properly maintained, the person himself too securing his good.

Gītā's reference to the fourfold social order.

The justification of the fourfold social order in the Gītā has become a subject of some dispute, and naturally needs some discussion here. The first point to be noted is that in any society all individuals do not possess the same nature, temperament or aptitude. And even if it were so, no society can function if all its members insist on performing one and the same type of work. The maintenance of the social order requires activities of diverse types. Therefore a division of labour, a classification of functions, is but essential in every society. And it being so, rather than let it happen in a haphazard manner, the more it follows the natural bent and aptitude of the individuals, the more will it avert the possibility of a square thing being fitted in a round hole. While on the one hand the maintenance of the social order requires diverse types of acts, different individuals on the other hand are in fact found to be naturally endowed with differing innate qualities and aptitudes. The primary responsibility of the social leader is therefore so to arrange the state of affairs that an individual will have the opportunity to perform such function as may accord with the aptitude within him. That is the implication of the introduction of the fourfold social order “in accordance with the distinctions of aptitudes and functions” (IV/13). And there seems no reason to object to it. One difficulty that arises is about the institution of castes as determined by birth. If a person follows a particular profession must his son too lead the life in the same fashion? In this respect it deserves to be pointed out that whatever the views in any other Indian religious work, one does not find in the Gītā that sort of rigid insistence on caste distinctions.

Besides, even in the allocation of the functions to the respective classes, one does not find any such partiality as the assignment of a life of mere ease and comfort specially

to any one class. For the priest class the Gītā lays down such hard duties as mental serenity, selfrestraint, penance, purity, pursuit of knowledge and the like. For the ruling class too it prescribes not a life of mere luxury and enjoyment but such duties as bravery, philanthropy and non-desertion of the battlefield even at the cost of life. The traders have been directed to look also to the preservation of the nation's cattle wealth, along with the pursuit of agriculture and commerce. And while service has been prescribed for the fourth class, it is not free or forced labour. Further, each of these functions is equally liable to the threefold distinction into the *sātvā*, *rajās* and *tamas* categories; and even the austerities of a *brāhmaṇa* and the charities of a *kṣatriya* can fall under the category of *tamas*, if wrongly done, not to talk of the blackmarketing by a trader. In short, it is not that the *brāhmaṇa* is always of the *sātvā* category, and the *śūdra* invariably of the *tamas*; it being quite possible for the latter to belong by his conduct to the *sātvā* category, and the former to the *tamas* and therefore be immoral. It may also be noted that the clear distinction in the sixteenth canto of the Gītā, between the divine or saintly (*dāivī*) temperament and the diabolical or evil (*āsurī*) one, would apply equally to all the four classes. Even a *brāhmaṇa* may have the latter and a *śūdra* the former. And finally it may not be overlooked that the Gītā expects each one of the four classes to do its duty without any egoistic attitude. That should clear all doubts that the fourfold social order as mentioned in the Gītā had anything to do with the exploitation of one class by another.

It is with such an unprejudiced angle that one should look at the following verses in the Gītā.

*sve sve karmāṇyabhirataḥ
samsiddhiṃ labhate naraḥ....XVIII/45*

*yataḥ pravṛtīrbhūtānāṃ
yena sardamidaṃ tatam
svakarmaṇā tamabhyarçya
siddhiṃ vindati mānavah. 46*

"Every man performing faithfully his own duty attains perfection ... XVIII/45. Worshipping, through the performance of one's duty, Him from whom all beings emanate (or, derive the tendency to action), and by whom all the universe is pervaded, man attains perfection—46." These observations will then be found to indicate, not any fraudulent attitude of exploiting some one under a false promise, but on the contrary a sincere optimistic message of the attainment of the same spiritual good by one and all, whether strong or weak, rich or poor, intelligent or otherwise, whether a priest, fighter, cultivator or labourer. Even a person who in view of his temperament and innate aptitude is unsuitable for the pursuit of knowledge, austerities, war and the like, may not feel disheartened. If according to his own capacities he honestly pursues the work of agriculture or some social service which (from the worldly point of view) may be regarded as of an inferior type, he can have in the spiritual field a status equal to that of a dutiful member of any other class. The Gītā assures that whoever performs his duty whether regarded as high or low in social status, will thereby be worshipping God, attaining in the end the same final goal. Once the idea of an inborn restriction is set aside, this scheme can be viewed from the proper angle.

Dr. Radhakrishnan on 'cāturvarṇya'.

In this connection the following observations of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the renowned philosopher of modern India, on the Gītā's reference to the fourfold order deserve to be quoted here. Commenting on the first line of verse IV/13 (cited above) he writes: "The emphasis is on *guṇa* (aptitude) and *karma* (function) and not *jāti* (birth.) The *varṇa* or the order to which we belong is independent of sex, birth or breeding. A class determined by temperament and vocation is not a caste determined by birth and heredity. According to the Mahābhārata the whole world was originally of one class but later it became divided into four divisions on account of the specific duties. Even the distinction between caste and outcaste is artificial and unnatural. An ancient verse points out that the *brāhmaṇ* and the outcaste are blood brothers. In the Mahābhārata

Yudhiṣṭhira says that it is difficult to find out the caste of persons on account of the mixture of castes. Men beget offspring in all sorts of women. So conduct is the only determining feature of caste according to sages. . . . The fourfold order is designed for human evolution. There is nothing absolute about caste system which has changed its character in the process of history. Today it cannot be regarded as anything more than an insistence on a variety of ways in which the social purpose can be carried out. Functional groupings will never be out of date and as for marriages they will happen among those who belong to more or less the same stage of cultural development. The present morbid condition of India broken into castes and subcastes is opposed to the unity taught by the Gītā, which stands for an organic as against an atomistic conception of society".¹

Universal equality and fraternity.

The question of the fourfold social order (*cāturvarṇya*) has assumed so much importance in Indian history and sociology, that it is very desirable to understand clearly the Gītā's stand about it. In this connection one very significant fact is also the constant emphasis in the Gītā on the basic identity and equality of all beings without any distinction. Thus Lord Kṛṣṇa describes himself as 'the friend of all beings',² 'residing in all beings',³ 'abode of all beings',⁴ 'one looking with an equal eye on all the beings',⁵ 'the origin and source of all beings'.⁶ Elsewhere it is again stressed that God resides equally in all beings.⁷ And further in the following lines Kṛṣṇa refers unambiguously to the prevalent fourfold social distinctions and adds:

*mām hi pārtha vyapāśritya
ye'pi syuh pāpayaṇayaḥ*

1. *The Bhagavadgītā*, pp. 160-161; see also pp. 364-65.
2. *suhradam sarvabhūtānām*, V/29.
3. *sarvabhūtasthitam*, VI/31; *sarvabhūtāśayasthitah*, X/20.
4. *matsthāni sarvabhūtāni*, IX/4. See also IX/6, 7.
5. *samo'haṁ sarvabhūteṣu*, IX/29.
6. *sarvabhūtānām bijam*, X/39; see also XIV/3.
7. XIII/27; XVIII/61.

*striyo vaiśyastathā śūdrās-
te'pi yānti parām gatim.
kim punarbrāhmaṇaḥ puṇyā
bhaktā rājāḥ; ayastathā . . .* 33

"Arjuna, by resorting to me those born in miserable bodies due to their past evil deeds (e. g. the blind, lepers, etc), as also even the females, *vaiśyas* and *śūdras* attain the highest state 32. What then to say of the holy *brāhmaṇas* and devoted royal sages! . . . 33." These words contain a clear disapproval of the contrary view that the females and those of the so-called lower *varṇas*, specially the *śūdras*, are unfit for philosophical pursuits and religious practices. Another similiar liberal reference in the Mahābhārata, specially declaring the females and the low-born as fit for the highest *yoga* practice, is cited below.

Consistently with the idea that God treats all beings with perfect equality, the Gītā enjoins the same for the ideal person. Thus we are told that the ideal *yogī* realises himself in all the beings¹; is absorbed in pursuing the true good of all beings²; hates no one;³ and treats all beings equally.⁴ In a particularly pointed remark the author of the Gītā says that in the view of the truly enlightened, an educated brahmin is not a whit higher than the *śvāpāka* (a sort of *śūdra*), indeed even the quadruped.⁵ At yet another place true knowledge is said to be that which gives the insight into the same basic essence in all beings.⁶

It would be hardly fair to judge the Gītā's sociological ideas without paying due attention to this clear and repeated

1. *sarvabhūtāmabhūtāmā*, V/7; see also VI/29.
2. *sarvabhūtāhite rataḥ*, V/25, XII/4.
3. *adveṣṭā sarvabhūtānām*, XII/13.
4. XVIII/54.
5. V/18. Let it not be said that this refers only to the essential biological similarity in all of these; for that would be felt by one and all, not specially by the enlightened one only. The Gītā obviously wants to stress that where the common man draws a distinction, the enlightened does not. This verse clearly intends a disparagement of the false sense of pride in a learned brahmin. See also VI/46.
6. XVIII/20.

insistence of it on complete universal fraternity and equality. Besides, it is not only in theory but also in matters of actual life that the author of the Mahābhārata (of which the Gītā is a part) indicates a liberal outlook within the sphere of social distinctions. Thus Droṇa, though of a brahmin family, is shown to have followed the warrior's walk of life, being in fact raised to the highest position of the commander-in-chief of the Kaurava army during the great war. None in the army protested against it. His son Aśvatthāmā and brother-in-law Kṛpācārya also fought as warriors in the war. On the contrary Bhīṣma, though a *kṣatriya* by birth, has given the most profound discourse on ethical and philosophical knowledge,¹ heard with complete respect by several leading *brāhmaṇas* and sages. And how can one fail to mention here Kṛṣṇa himself, a *kṣatriya* by birth, who delivered the very Gītā discourse itself said to contain the quintessence of the sublime Upaniṣadic knowledge and wisdom.

Vyāsa's liberal humanistic outlook.

There are some other relevant references also. When after the death of their father Pāṇḍu, the young Pāṇḍavas were taken to their uncle Dhṛtarāṣṭra at Hastinapur, all the four social classes including the *śūdras* were residing there in perfect amity without any feeling of mutual illwill.² Again, when a few years later the Pāṇḍavas went to the city of Vārāṇas they visited the houses not only of the learned *brāhmaṇas*, city officers and the traders but also of the *śūdras*.³ The Mahābhārata also cites an incident wherein under the directions of Lord Kṛṣṇa himself, God Indra appeared before a thirsty *brāhmaṇa* sage named Uttanka, in the form of a *cāṇḍāla* (a sort of *śūdra*) offering him water (which was in fact divine nectar). The sage refused to accept the water from the *cāṇḍāla*, who then disappeared. Thereupon Kṛṣṇa revealed the true identity of the *cāṇḍāla* to Uttanka and

1. Embodied in the Śānti Parva and Anuśāsana Parva.

2. Ādi Parva, 125/14; see also Sabhā Parva 21/12, where the same is said about the city of Magadha.

3. Ādi Parva, 145/6-7.

remonstrated him for his refusal to accept the water.¹ The story has its own moral for the rigid orthodox treating the *śūdra* with lifelong contempt and forbidding him even to draw drinking water from public wells.

At one stage in the course of Bhīṣma's discourse Yudhiṣṭhira puts an interesting question. If in a national calamity the *kṣatriya* rulers fail in their duty and others bravely come forward to defend the country, how are the latter to be treated? Here is the clear answer of the Mahābhārata: Whoever saves the country in such a crisis, whether he be a *śūdra* or any one else, deserves the title of a king with all royal honours; a king who cannot protect his people being as useless as an impotent person or a barren cloud.² Chapter 240 of the Śānti Parva, in the same discourse, describes in details the practice of the *yoga* leading to the highest state of self-realisation. It is a direct talk by Vyāsa himself to his son Suka. This chapter and the Gītā's sixth canto (which also deals with the *yoga* practice) have several verbatim expressions in common,³ besides many common ideas with a slightly different wording. Now with all this similarity between the two, the said chapter ends with the clear remark that even one born in a low *varṇa* can practise the *yoga* and attain the highest state⁴. Brushing aside all social distinctions, Vyāsa here declares that even a so-called low-born can become a *yogī* in the true sense. And such a *yogī*, the Gītā says, is higher than even a person of (mere) knowledge.⁵

Chapter 189 of the Śānti Parva is also of great impor-

1. Āśvamedhika Parva, chapter 55. Also worth noting here is the story of Jājāli, a brahmin who practised very severe austerities and in consequence developed a false sense of pride. He was directed to seek real wisdom from Tuladhāra, a *vaiśya*, who was practising his trading profession with complete honesty. Vide Śānti Parva, chapters 261-64.

2. Śānti Parva, 78/38-44.

3. *sarvatra samadarśinaḥ* (VI/29) . *śabdabrahmāhūrtale* (VI/44). *samaloṣāśmakañṇamālā* (VI/8). Besides, *samiyanyendriyagrāhāni* occurs in Gītā XII/4, and *sanahḥ sarveṣu bhūteṣu* in XVIII/54.

4. *api varṇādukṣastu nārī vā dharmakāṅkṣiṇī, tācapyētena mṛgeṇa gacchētām paramām gatīm*. This mentions the female also besides the low-born.

5. *yogī jñānibhyo'pi mato dhikah*, VI/46.

tance in this context. Therein the sage Bhṛgu lays down in plain terms that he who actually performs the duties of a *brāhmaṇa* deserves to be so called; he who performs the functions of a *kṣatriya* is to be classed as a *kṣatriya*; and so on. Thereafter, not content with this, Bhṛgu adds without hesitation that if the *brāhmaṇa* characteristics are actually present in one born as a *śūdra*, and absent in one born as *brāhmaṇa*, neither is the former in reality a *śūdra* nor the latter a *brāhmaṇa*.¹ It may be worth pointing out here the status of this sage Bhṛgu. In the tenth canto of the Gītā he is named as the highest of the great sages, Lord Kṛṣṇa identifying himself with him.² It is his remark that in the beginning all men belonged only to the one *brāhmaṇa* class but later got classified according to the nature of their living³ (referred above in the quotation from Dr. Radhakrishnan). Once it is agreed that originally there were no such social classes, which happened to be introduced later on due to the exigencies of social organisation, the entire rigidity of the stand whittles down. One is then freed from any inhibition to think about an alternative arrangement if necessary in the changing interests of the society and humanity.⁴

1. *Śūtre caitadbrahmacakṣyam dvije tacea na vidyate, na vai śūdro bhavet śūdro brāhmaṇo na va brāhmaṇaḥ*. In the Vana Parva also (313/108), while answering the *yakṣa*, Yudhiṣṭhira declares that brahminhood depends on neither one's family nor on mere learning but on the conduct.

2. *maharṣiṇām bhīṣṭurāham*, X/25.

3. *na videso'sti varṇānām sarvaṁ brāhmaṇamidaṁ jagat, brāhmaṇā pūrvaryas-taṁ hi karmabhirvaramāṇāṁ gatam*, Shanti Parva, 188/10.

4. Lord Kṛṣṇa while saying that he has created the fourfold social order (on the basis of inborn aptitudes and corresponding functions) adds that he is its author and also not its author, describing himself in the same breath as *avyaya* (eternal), vide Gītā IV/13. What may be the precise implication of this paradoxical remark? Does the Gītā's author want to suggest that if at any future age the Indian society wished to have second thoughts on the *cāturvarṇya* system, there could be no objection on his part? Is it intended that while Lord Kṛṣṇa himself is *avyaya*, the fourfold social order is *vyaya* i.e. liable to change and modification? I feel that even in the days of the Mahābhārata the social leaders must have started experiencing some difficulty in fitting the various new professions coming up in a developing society within the four strict compartments of the *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya* and *śūdra*. The state of the society as depicted in the Mahābhārata certainly had a high level of culture and civilization. Thus there were expert physicians, mechanics, sculptors, engineers and the like. How were they to be classed according to the fourfold order? Could the engineers who built the magnificent halls and buildings (vide e.g. Sabhā Parva, 33/48) be called *śūdras*? Or could they be called *vaiśyas*? So also there must have been numerous persons belonging to all the four *varṇas* working as government officers and the like. We have already referred to some leading *brāhmaṇas* acting as warriors.

All this indicates a broad universal standpoint of the Mahābhārata and the Gītā, far above the one that most unfortunately gripped Indian society for a long period, drawing invidious hateful distinctions between one part of itself and another. Notwithstanding Lord Kṛṣṇa's own clarion call in the Gītā to any and every one to follow him and attain liberation, the retrograde tendency went to the extent of treating some members of the society as God-forsaken and not deserving to join the others even in the common worship of God, indeed declaring them untouchables! No wonder India suffered from repeated foreign dominations by a handful of invaders for centuries together, along with mass atrocities by foreign fanatics. Basically it was a most unfortunate social defeat rather than a military one. A house divided a thousandfold against itself could hardly face such a national crisis. The broad sound teachings of the Mahābhārata and the Gītā were thoroughly overlooked.¹

Mahābhārata and Plato.

Of course the Mahābhārata also contains references to the hereditary system of social classes. After all it is but natural for any such vast literary work to reflect to some extent the customs and ideas current at the time. But a careful reading of the Gītā and the Mahābhārata certainly shows that their great author, in the context of the prevalent social ideas of the age, has tried to stress and activate a liberal humanistic outlook transcending all narrow distinctions between man and man; not overlooking at the same time the need of a suitable division of public functions for the good of a well organised society. It is therefore desirable to look at the Gītā's mention of the fourfold social order in its true context and perspective. In this respect it may also be

1. Of course this is not to say that there were no redeeming features in Indian culture; or that similar or worse faults did not overtake other cultures in the world. Indeed it is due to its basic redeeming aspects that after long dark ages Indian philosophy and culture, re-understood in their proper universal perspective, have been able to again come into their own. As for the rigid caste system it was an internal matter of the Hindus; and somehow the entire society came to believe in its sanctity. But the Hindus never thought of making any one outside their fold as a *slave*.

of interest to compare the views of the Mahābhārata with the following views of Plato, in ancient Greece, as summarised by Bertrand Russell¹. 'Plato begins by deciding that the citizens are to be divided into three classes: the common people, the soldiers, and the guardians. The last, alone, are to have political power. There are to be much fewer of them than of the other two classes. In the first instance, it seems, they are to be chosen by the legislator; after that, they will usually succeed by heredity, but in exceptional cases a promising child may be promoted from one of the inferior classes, while among the children of guardians a child or young man who is unsatisfactory may be degraded.....The definition of 'justice' which is the nominal goal of the whole discussion, is reached in Book IV. It consists, we are told, in everybody doing his own work, and not being a busybody: the city is *just* when trader, auxiliary, and guardian, each does his own job without interfering with that of other classes.....There are several points to be noted about Plato's definition. First, it makes it possible to have inequalities of power and privilege without injustice. The guardians are to have all the power, because they are the wisest members of the community; injustice would only occur, on Plato's definition, if there were men in the other classes who were wiser than some of the guardians. That is why Plato provides for promotion and degradation of citizens, although he thinks that the double advantage of birth and education will, in most cases, make the children of guardians superior to the children of others....'

Arjuna's significant question about scriptural testimony.

One need not suppose that the Gītā's author would unconditionally recognise the authority of any particular scriptural work, in the field of ethics seeing that he has not hesitated to observe the following even about the *vedas* held in India in high esteem :

1. *History of Western Philosophy*, pp. 129-35. The views of the Gītā may also be compared with those of F.H. Bradley in his *Ethical Studies*, specially Essay V on 'My Station and its Duties'.

traigunyanīṣayā vedā
nīstraigunyo bhavārjuna .. II/45

‘The *vedas* deal with the three qualities (*saṭta*, *rajas* and *tamas*). Arjuna, rise above the three qualities...’, and so also :

yāvānārtha udāpāne
sarvataḥ samplutodake
tāvānsarveṣu vedeṣu
brāhmaṇasya vijānataḥ. II/46

‘As is the significance (i.e. the lack of it) of a well when there is water on all sides (the wise do not then resort to it for water), the same is the significance of the *vedas* for one who has realised final knowledge (i.e. they have little significance for him; he no more needs the fruits of acts promised in the *vedas*)’. By the expression *sāstra* or scripture the Gītā understands the general rules of conduct beneficial for common guidance and stabilisation of the social order.¹ Normally it is but proper that the individual should observe such rules and follow their viewpoint in the deliberation over the right and wrong. The idea of the Gītā's author also appears on this point to be confined only to that.²

1. See the following verse from *Mahābhārata Śāntiparva*, 269/58: ‘Thus is it laid down that all that is good conduct is *sāstra*: and whatever is wrong is the opposite of it’.

2. Sri Aurobindo observes: ‘Shastra does not mean a mass of customs, some good, some bad, unintelligently followed by the customary routine mind of the tamasic man. Shastra is the knowledge and teaching laid down by intuition, experience and wisdom, the science and art and ethics of life, the best standards available to the race.....The Shastra, the recognised Right that he (man) has set up to govern his lower members by his reason and intelligent will, must therefore first be observed and made the authority for conduct and works and for what should or should not be done, till the instinctive desire nature is schooled and abated and put down by the habit of self-control and man is ready first for a freer intelligent self-guidance and then for the highest supreme law and supreme liberty of the spiritual nature’. — *Essays on the Gītā*, Series II, pp. 320-321.

But we have at one place in the Gītā itself a further indication of the fact that it attaches only a limited significance to the scriptural texts in the ethics of action. After being directed at the conclusion of the sixteenth canto to look to the scripture for the right and wrong, Arjuna raises the following very significant question.

*ye śāstravidhimutsṛjya
yajante śraddhayanvītāḥ
te'sāṃ niṣṭhā tu kā kṛṣṇa
sattvamāho rajastamaḥ.* XVII/1

“Kṛṣṇa, of what type viz. *sattva*, *rajas* or *tamas* is the conviction of those who discard the procedure enjoined in the scriptures, and yet (without wilfully pursuing egoistic attachment) perform sacrificial (and such other) action (as approved by their reason) with an attitude of faith?” To this Kṛṣṇa replied :

*trividhā bhavati śraddhā
dehinām sā svabhāvajā
sāttvikī rājasī cāiva
tāmāśi ceti tām śṛṇu.* XVII/2

*sattvānurūpā sarvasya
śraddhā bhavati bhārata
śraddhāmāyo'yaṃ puruṣo
yo yacchraddhaḥ sa eva sah.* 3
*yajante sāttvikā devān
yakṣaraksāṃsi rājasāḥ
pretān bhūtagaṇāṃśtānye
yajante tāmasā janāḥ.* 4

“That faith of men, arising out of their own nature (and not based on scriptures or the imitation of others) can be of the three varieties—*sattva*, *rajas* or *tamas*. Listen to that—XVII/2. Arjuna, everyone's faith follows his own individual nature. Man as such is a being of faith (everybody has his faith somewhere or other); as is one's faith so is he—XVII/3. Those of the *sattva* nature worship the gods, those

of *rajas* worship such supernatural beings as the *yakṣāṃsi* and the *raksāṃsi* (heavenly officers and guards); while the rest of *tamas* nature worship ghosts and evil spirits—XVII/4.”

To the present writer these verses, usually overlooked, seem to deserve special attention for grasping the true significance of the Gītā. If with the direction in the sixteenth canto to follow the scripture in determining the right and wrong the topic had been closed, it could have meant that in the view of the Gītā no conduct outside the scripture can be good. True, if by scripture is meant, not the Indian scripture alone, but the beneficial rules of conduct established in any society for common guidance and fostering the general sense of unity, even such a direction can be suited for the good of humanity.¹ But even so the important question would still remain, whether all conduct outside such established rules is to be condemned. No doubt the scriptural injunctions should not be ordinarily violated; and to do so out of egoistic attachment is surely wrong (vide XVI/23). Nevertheless, are all those necessarily immoral whose own reason, not influenced by egoistic attachment, does not agree with the path laid down by the prevalent scriptures?

Such being the implication of Arjuna's above question, the faith to which it refers is one contrary to, or at any rate independent of, the current scriptural texts and yet directed towards the idea of true good. The question seeks the evaluation of the conduct of one whom the prevalent procedure does not appeal, and yet who is animated by a desire to pursue the path of true wellbeing, to perform good action. Considered in this light, one can easily see the importance of this question in the ethics of action.² Indeed the very speciality of the question lies in the evaluation of the conduct

1. See p.p. 224-245 below.

2. Sankara thinks that Arjuna's question refers to the conduct of those persons, who not being themselves conversant with the scriptural procedure try to imitate with faith the (scriptural) conduct of the elders in the family or society; and not to those who knowingly differ from the scriptural procedure. Such an interpretation deprives the question of all its special significance. Besides, it does not also accord with Kṛṣṇa's reply to it. If the question meant this, Kṛṣṇa would not have referred to the *tāmasa* worship of ghosts and the like.

of one, who though knowing the current scriptural injunctions wants to tread a different path due to honest disagreement. Of course, as already said, his transgression of the scriptural injunctions is not the outcome of egoistic attachment; that variety being already considered in verse XVI/23. The question under consideration relates to one who having faith in the true good, yet wants to follow his own reason rather than the current scriptures. Though he is *śraddhāyānvitāḥ* 'with an attitude of faith' (XVII/1), that faith of his is not for the prevalent scriptural procedure but for the final good, the goal for which the scriptural procedure itself is but a means.

Good conduct possible even apart from scriptural procedure.

Having ascertained the import of Arjuna's question, let us now turn to Kṛṣṇa's reply to it. The first thing that strikes attention therein is that it does not straightway condemn all conduct differing from the current scriptural procedure. This indicates the Gītā's broad point of view. The natural conviction in the heart of a man can belong to either of the three varieties—*sāttva*, *rajas* or *tamas*. It cannot be invariably said to be good or bad. Though one may be inspired by faith for the true good, the precise type of his conduct will nevertheless depend upon what act he specifically performs in pursuance of it. In short, the mere fact that the worship is born of sincere faith will not suffice, it must be actually of the right type too. If not, it will be wrong though born of faith; and on the other hand, if of the right type it will be of the *sāttva* category though differing from the established scriptural procedure. It is hoped that the reader will now perceive what an important principle is implied in these verses. The scriptural injunction is not the sole standard for the right and wrong; though of course it is desirable to recognise its authority as a normal rule of conduct. But while the action of one acting differently from the established scriptural procedure is not censurable only on that account, he must carefully consider whether his act is in fact right or wrong. If it is fully of the right type it will come under the *sāttva* category; if of intermediate level, under *rajas*; and if lowest, under the *tamas* category, irrespective of its being born of the

faith for the good. Taking the word 'worship' (*yajanam*) here in a broad sense, as 'any act performed with the good motive of attaining the true good'¹, it is possible to interpret the worship of gods, demigods and ghosts etc. (in verse XVII/4) respectively as a fully right act, a semi-right act, and a wrong act. This very classification is described later with reference to action, reason, and steadfastness of will. The Gītā has thus briefly indicated the moral value of the conduct of one who without faith in the current scripture seeks to pursue his good according to his own light. While allowing a scope to the individual's own reason, it has at the same time also pointed out the risk in an indiscriminate use of it.

Gītā's rational outlook.

Looking from this angle at the threefold distinctions given in the seventeenth and eighteenth cantos, one finds therein an appropriate reconciliation between established scriptural rules and the individual's freedom of reason. The Gītā does not disapprove an act on the sole ground of its disagreement with the scriptures. Whenever condemning an anti-scriptural act it also mentions in addition such passions as attraction, aversion, egoistic attachment and the like. See, for instance : "He who violates the injunctions of the scriptures and behaves under the promptings of egoistic attachment attains neither perfection, nor happiness, nor the supreme goal—XVI/23". As also :

*aśāstravīṭam ghoram
tāpyante ye tāpo janāḥ
dambhāhaṇkārasamyuktāḥ
kāmarāgabalanvītāḥ.*

XVII/5

"Those men, full of hypocrisy and conceit, driven by the force of egoistic attachment and attraction, who practise horrible austerities, not sanctioned by scriptures". What reasonable man will fail to condemn a violation of the scripture under the influence of such a passion ? In the definition of the

¹. *Yajanta* iti yāgyagrahaṇam dānāderupalakṣaṇam, Ānandagiri's commentary on verse XVII/1.

tamas type of sacrifice too, as given in verse XVII/13, it is said to be one not only differing from the scriptural procedure but devoid of all faith whatever. Plainly, therefore, such an act is not of the same type as that of the faith-inspired persons in the above question of Arjuna. At the above places there is a reference to the influence of passions besides a conflict with the scriptures.

But apart from that also, we see at several other places the Gītā expounding the classification into *satva*, *rajas* and *tamas* in general terms without a reference to the scriptures. It shows all the more its rational line of approach despite its respect for the scripture. Thus the threefold classification of food stated in XVII/8,9, 10 will be seen to be based on a rational reflection, on a consideration of consequences, and not merely on the authority of any scriptural text. It has already been shown above how in its classification of charity too, the Gītā advocates the consideration of consequences in the light of the prevailing situation. Look also at the following classification of knowledge.

<i>sarvabhūteṣu yenaikam</i>	
<i>bhāvamavyayamīkṣate</i>	
<i>avibhaktam vibhakteṣu</i>	
<i>tajjñānam viddhi sātvikam.</i>	XVIII/20
<i>prthakvena tu yajjñānam</i>	
<i>nānābhāvāṇṛthagvīdhaṁ</i>	
<i>vetti sarveṣu bhūteṣu</i>	
<i>tajjñānam viddhi rājasam.</i>	21
<i>yattu kṛtsnavadekasmīn</i>	
<i>kārye saktamahetukam</i>	
<i>atattvārthavadalpaṁ ca</i>	
<i>tattāmasamudāhṛtam.</i>	22

"Know the knowledge as of the *satva* category, by which is realised the one imperishable spirit, the indivisible one amidst the divided many—XVIII/20. Know that knowledge as of the *rajas* category, however, which perceives amidst the entire creation a multiplicity of different objects in all their separateness—21. But that (knowledge) is known as of the *tamas* category which is only a little and is entirely attached to one

single object, without proper reason and without understanding the true principle—22". It will be easily seen that this account of knowledge is of a purely scientific nature; and nowhere does it dogmatically insist on regarding the contents of any one particular scriptural text alone as true knowledge.

It is certainly not true that the consideration of consequences is eschewed in the Gītā's theory of action. Intuitive guidance may be helpful in ascertaining the final goal; but descending lower down in the province of the daily conduct, of the particular acts, a reliance on it would be improper and productive of confusion. Nor can one entirely depend on the scriptural standard. For in the first place, it will be hardly possible to find a scriptural text applicable to every practical situation in life; and besides, the scriptures do not all speak with the same voice. Clearly no consistent system of ethics can deny the important place of the deliberative reason in the ethics of action.

Out of the different available criteria for this purpose, let us first take intuition. Referring to the "apparently quite easy" method of the immediate judgment of intuition or conscience for the determination of the right and wrong, Tilak rejects it in view of the several difficulties it involves.¹ Next, as for the conduct of great personalities, he admits at one place that it can serve as a moral guide for the common man on critical occasions.² And yet when discussing its value scientifically, he discards it on the ground that it is not possible to define precisely the 'great' persons and also that their conduct does not indicate the required consistency.³

Now as for the deliberation over consequences, even the wider social ones, we have already seen how on the whole he disapproves it; those acting on its basis being regarded by him as *kṛpāṇa*.⁴ But there are also some passages in his work where this criterion is accepted as essential for moral judgment. "...In order to determine the goodness or badness of human acts one has necessarily to consider first the doer's *buddhi* i.e., the purpose with which he did the act and whether he was conscious of its consequences".⁵ "Man, as such, it obviously follows, is bound to act whatever he does only after a discriminative deliberation".⁶ These occasional expressions apart, Tilak's general view is against the deliberation over consequences. "It is often observed in the daily life" he says at one place, "that different scholars do such deliberation in different ways in accordance with their respective reason, and differently judge the morality of the same act"; and adds further, "We have therefore now to find out what, if any, are the other means to decide correctly such questions about the right and wrong, and in case there are several of them which is the best one".⁷ We shall presently see what other criterion he proposes to rely upon for purposes of the moral judgment.

1. Vide *Ibid*, Chapter VI paras 1,2,3,6.
2. *Ibid*, Chapter XII para 13.
3. *Ibid*, Chapter III para 12.
4. *Ibid*, Chapter XII para 6; quoted above in footnote to page 209.
5. *Ibid*, Chapter XV para 2. The clarification of *buddhi* in this extract is Tilak's own.
6. *Ibid*, Chapter XV para 3.
7. *Ibid*, Chapter III para 12.

CHAPTER XIV

THE VIEWS OF TILAK AND GANDHI

Tilak's ethical views.

We have already made occasional references in the previous chapters to Tilak's ideas of moral action. It will however be worth while adding here a few more comments in view of the importance of his treatise in the field of Gītā ethics.

At several places Tilak regards the *niskāma* attitude as the sole moral criterion and maintains that the classification of acts into the egoistic and non-egoistic is alone adequate for ethical purposes.¹ "When the reason has become *niskāma*" he writes "whatever act is done does not come in the way of Liberation".² If so, once the reason is non-egoistic there would remain no need of any deliberation whether the intended act is objectively right or wrong. However, elsewhere he also advocates the necessity of the right-wrong distinction besides that into the egoistic and non-egoistic³; and even admits that an act though non-egoistic in motive may yet be wrong and sinful.⁴ In one of such passages he rightly remarks that 'the quintessence of the entire ethics of the Gītā' is that one ought to perform with a non-egoistic attitude his specific 'duty' i.e. *dharma* appropriate to the particular time, place and circumstances.⁵

Apart from the inconsistency between the two stands, there naturally arises the important question as to how to determine according to Tilak the rightness of an action. How is one to determine his duty in his specific set of circumstances?

1. See e.g. *op. cit.* Note on verse XVIII/2.
2. *Ibid*, Chapter XIV para 15.
3. *Ibid*, Chapter II para 14.
4. *Ibid*, Chapter XII para 11; see also the next para.
5. *Ibid*, Chapter XII para 13.

Tilak is no doubt correct in objecting to the onesided view of the utilitarians like Mill that the morality of action should be judged entirely by external consequences. It is, however, unfortunate that he himself often goes to the other extreme to maintain that the consideration of consequences should be altogether avoided in passing the moral judgment. It could be justifiably urged that not accepting it as the sole moral criterion, one should also consider along with it the purity of the motive. At a few places Tilak himself adopts that balanced standpoint.¹ But more often than not he lapses into the extreme opposition to the deliberation over consequences.

His recourse to the testimony of scriptures.

After thus setting aside the criteria of intuition, conduct of the great, and consideration of consequences, for the determination of the right and wrong, Tilak is compelled to turn helplessly to the authority of scriptural injunctions. Little wonder that having unwarrantedly eschewed the rational deliberation from the field of morality, such writers are inevitably led to place on scriptural testimony an emphasis out of all proportion. As seen in the last chapter, the Gītā while respecting the scriptural text reconciles it with the freedom of the individual's reason. And yet, at numerous places Tilak has expressed the view that the scriptural injunction is the Gītā's sole criterion for the determination of the right and wrong. "The only wise course is...to remain performing all acts as prescribed by the scriptures, with a non-egoistic *buddhi* (attitude), for the benefit of the world";² "In short, the Gītā says that...since action is inevitable it necessarily follows that one ought to perform with a selfless attitude the inevitable action ordained by the scriptures";³ "The duty of man is nothing but...the lifelong performance for the continuation and maintenance of the world, of whatever portion of action has fallen to one's lot in accordance with the scriptures, as

1. *Ibid.*, Chap. IV, para 6; Chap XII para 13.

2. *Ibid.*, Chap V, para 9.

3. *Ibid.*, Chap XI, para 11.

applicable to his (social) status, and that for no particular purpose but with the non-egoistic attitude."¹

Now, such interpretations unnecessarily restrict the universal character of the Gītā gospel and reduce its significance. But to avoid any injustice to Tilak's standpoint it is necessary to also quote here the following extract. Immediately following the last of his above quoted observations he writes: "Since in the age of the Gītā the 'fourfold social order' was in vogue, it lays down that these social duties are ordained for each man according to that division (of the society) into the four classes; and the origin of these distinctions on the basis of the differentiation of aptitude and action (*guṇa-karmavibhāgaśāh*) has been explained in the eighteenth canto. But let no one infer from it that the ethical principles of the Gītā are solely dependent on the fourfold social order...The exposition of ethics has not been made dependant in the Gītā on any particular social order like the four-classed one, but has been based on universal philosophical principles. The main substance of the ethics of the Gītā is that a man ought to perform the duty as ordained by the scriptures, with a reason that is non-egoistic and regards all selves as similar to his own; and this applies equally to the peoples of all countries...the Gītā has referred to the fourfold social order just as one natural illustration applicable to that age. ...This, however, is not the main part of the Gītā, and it must be borne in mind that the broad theory of the Gītā ethics as a whole is that even if anywhere the fourfold social order is not in vogue, or has broken down, a man is born, not for mere enjoyment, but to perform for the maintenance of the world order, with courage, enthusiasm, non-egoistic reason and the sense of duty, whatever acts of the maintenance and progress of the society one has been ordained to perform in accordance with the prevalent social order. And the view expressed by some that the Gītā ethics is founded only on the fourfold social order is not correct...Whatever act one has been ordained to do, in accordance with the fourfold or any other social order that may be in vogue, or

1. *Ibid.*, Chap XV, para 7 (see also Chap XIV, opening sentence.)

is once accepted by one as his duty according to his liking if possible, becomes his duty, and the Gītā states that it is condemnable from the point of view of both morality as well as universal good, for any one to desert that duty and perform at the spur of the moment the task of some one else on any pretext....The essence of the Gītā ethics is that whatever the social order, one should enthusiastically perform the acts ordained for him therein in accordance with his social position (role or status), and thus secure his spiritual benefit in the form of universal good.....Whatever acts he (the person of equanimous reason) performs purely from the sense of duty and in accordance with whatever social order that may be prevalent at the time, by their own nature themselves turn out to be conducive to the general good".¹

It will be seen that to the question whether the Gītā gospel is confined only to the particular fourfold social order of the Hindus, or also extends to the other established social systems in the world, Tilak's answer as appearing from the above extract is no doubt in favour of the latter alternative and therefore indicative of a very broad viewpoint in this respect. But if it is asked as to whether the Gītā ethics recognises the importance of only the established codes and systems, or also of the discriminative deliberation by the individual, the above extract will by and large point to the former alternative. Tilak speaks again and again of a man's duty being 'ordained' by the prevalent social order, barring only a solitary casual reference to a man accepting his duty according to his 'liking' (whatever that may mean). Not that it is always good to oppose established conventions. But if one feels it imperative to oppose a prevalent custom in the interest of the wider social good itself, what guiding principle should he adopt in such a crisis? And besides, there is another obviously important point also. For numerous complex situations arising in the keliedioscope of the worldly life one will find no guidance in such codes. And further, as Tilak himself observes at one place, "the injunctions of the scriptures are often conflicting. To ascertain which, if any, is the

1. *Ibid*, Chapter XV para 7.

method to determine the course that a man ought to follow on such occasions is the subject matter of the Gītā discourse."¹

It is indeed unfortunate that having here raised the proper question, Tilak fights shy of accepting in plain terms the need of a rational deliberation over the objective consequences when performing a voluntary act. There is no doubt that the established customs and conventions in a society can often afford a good general guidance for the individual.² But that cannot totally replace the need of such deliberation in the context of the actual situation at any given moment. It is hardly possible to found a sound theory of ethics purely on the basis of the established codes and scriptures. And the main point being urged by the present writer is that no exposition of the Gītā's theory of moral action will do full justice to its great author, unless a prominent place is clearly assigned to the rational impersonal deliberation over the consequences of one's act, in addition to any other available criteria.

Thus we find Tilak disposing of one by one the various criteria for the determination of the rightness of human action. The result is that being left in the end without any definite objective standard for that purpose, he is eventually led to regard the right-wrong distinction itself as unnecessary or at least secondary, and to repeatedly revert exclusively to the non-egoistic character of the agent's subjective attitude.

Gandhi's views.

Let us turn to another recent interpretation of the Gītā gospel. Gandhi's work on the Gītā has also been already referred before. In his Introduction he observes: "again, let no one consider renunciation to mean want of fruit for the renouncer. The Gītā reading does not warrant such a meaning. Renunciation means absence of hankering after fruit. As a matter of fact, he who renounces reaps a thousandfold. The renunciation of the Gītā is the acid test of faith. He who

1. *Ibid*, Chapter III para 2.

2. Cp. Bradley : "If you could be as good as your world, you would be better than most likely you are, and to wish to be better than the world is to be already on the threshold of immorality". *Ethical Studies*, P. 199.

is ever brooding over result often loses nerve in the performance of his duty. He becomes impatient and then gives vent to anger and begins to do unworthy things; he jumps from action to action, never remaining faithful to any. He who broods over results is like a man given to objects of senses; he is ever distracted, he says goodbye to all scruples, everything is right in his estimation and he therefore resorts to means fair and foul to attain his end." Such a wholesale rejection of the consequences of action, however, has no sanction in the Gītā, which only forbids the desire for egoistic consequences. It does not disapprove the desire for other consequences. There is no risk of a concern for them reducing a man to the state described in the above extract; though one pursuing egoistic consequences is liable to sink to that level.

The unscientific idea that voluntary action is possible even in the total absence of all desire for consequences finds a place in Gandhi's writing too; and it is in fact on its basis that he has expressed the above sweeping condemnation of the consequences of action. He observes in the same Introduction, "He who gives up action falls. He who gives up only the reward rises. But renunciation of fruit in no way means indifference to the result. In regard to every action one must know the result that is expected to follow, the means thereto, and the capacity for it. He, who, being thus equipped in the due fulfilment of the task before him, is said to have renounced the fruits of his action." Having advocated the total abandonment of all desire for consequences, a lip service has here been paid to them to avoid the charge of an advocacy of thoughtless action. It is just a verbal escape by urging that it is only the desire, but not the thought or consideration, of the consequences that is to be avoided. But it can hardly bear a close scrutiny. Without the mind entertaining a desire for consequences, no one would be impelled to a voluntary act by a mere knowledge or idea of them. In spite of the knowledge that a certain medicine would result in the patient's recovery, one would not proceed to administer it unless he feels a desire to bring about that consequence. One cannot help remarking that unnecessarily equating *kāma* with all desires whatever, such in-

terpretations of the Gītā attempt to give an impracticable form to its teachings.¹ By describing an act as *niskāma* one knows that it is not egoistic but not what it positively is. To know that, it would be necessary to refer to those positive non-egoistic consequences the desire for which actuated the agent's mind. In short, while the non-egoistic attitude is obviously opposed to egoistic desires, it need have no such opposition to the desire for consequences as such; nor does the Gītā advocate any such antagonism.

Excessive opposition to consequences.

Here is one more conspicuous example of the helplessness to which the science of ethics is reduced by a banishment of all deliberation over consequences. If the non-egoistic attitude with complete indifference to consequences is regarded as the moral criterion, on what grounds can one disapprove such acts as fanatical murder committed even at the risk of the agent's life? It does not appear that those who regard non-attachment or the non-egoistic attitude as the sole moral criterion would be able to object to such an act with certainty. Mr. Mahadeo Desai, a staunch follower of Gandhi, has raised in his book this very question of a murder being sought to be justified in the name of the Gītā, but has been unable to satisfactorily reply to it from his anti-consequence standpoint. On the contrary, his reply at that place throws lucid light on the untenability of such a standpoint. He observes "But, it may be said, any man may call himself an instrument in the hands of God and perpetrate all kinds of excesses. Such a

1. See the following apt observations of Dr Radhakrishnan. "The Upaniṣads ask us to renounce selfish endeavours, but not all interests. Detachment from self and attachment to God are what the Upaniṣads demand. The ideal sage has desires, though they are not selfish desires. Kāma, which we are asked to renounce, is not desire as such, but only the animal desire, lust, the impulsive craving of the brute man. Freedom from kāma is enjoined, but this is not blank passivity. . . . Desire as such is not forbidden. It all depends upon the object. If a man's desire is the flesh, he becomes an adulterer; if things of beauty, an artist; if God, a saint. The desires for salvation and knowledge are highly commended. A distinction is drawn between true desires and false ones (Chāndogya, vii 1.3), and we are asked to share in the true ones. . . . The Lord of all creation has kāma in the sense of desire. 'He desired (akāmayata), let me become many'. If the Lord has desires, why should not we?"—*Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 215.

one has yet to arise and be believed in by the world!.. Let not Christian friends run away with the thought that the teaching, however one explains it away, is bound to mislead people. There is indeed the fear of the Gītā being used in defence of murder, but the world has luckily the rough and ready standard to judge the man who makes the claim to murder in God's name. The test, after all, is not the claim advanced by the doer of the deed, but how the world judges him'.¹

Though it is said in the opening portion of the above extract that a person committing atrocities in the name of God has yet to be born, Mr. Desai himself has mentioned Hitler who actually sought to do so. But as a matter of fact innumerable atrocities have been perpetrated in the history of mankind in the name of God; at any rate India needs no heartrending reminders in that respect! Now remains the question of the world believing such a justification of an atrocious act. But are we at last to fall back upon the mere opinion of the world as the final moral standard? It will be easily seen how in the above extract the writer is helplessly whirling round that one criterion. Having discarded the basic standard of the rational discriminative deliberation, one cannot but take recourse to such secondary ones as scriptural testimony, public opinion, and the like. But the verdict of public opinion is not invariably correct. Nor does the society always speak with one voice. While geographically the 'world' is one, and politically is desired to be one, from the individual psychological viewpoint the number of worlds is infinite. Almost every one has his special 'world' of friends and well-wishers; and usually he cares more for its judgment than for that of the other 'worlds'.

Besides, even assuming that such a judgment of the world is pronounced with one voice and is also correct, it is necessary to consider here the basis of that judgment. A proper scrutiny will show that the final basis of the "rough and ready standard" employed by the world in arriving at such a judgment is also nothing but the discriminative deliberation over consequences. If an atrocious act, said to be personally

1. *The Gītā According to Gandhi*, pp. 107-8.

non-egoistic and without attachment for the 'fruit' of action, is yet regarded by the mass mind as immoral, it is not because the society has complete faith in the views that concentrate on the non-egoistic attitude or non-attachment, but because luckily it has not! Were it really to believe that 'according to the Gītā actions are classified only into the egoistic and non-egoistic, the former to be avoided and the latter performed,' or that 'there is no right-wrong distinction in the acts themselves, attachment for fruit being alone wrong and non-attachment for it right,' even its judgment could hardly differ from the self-defence of such a person. For, after all, it is on the strength of such a view itself that he seeks to justify his own act. That contention of his would have to be met by a rational examination of the entire consequences of the act, no matter whether they are non-egoistic from his personal standpoint.

A peculiar verse.

At this stage it will be better to consider the following apparently curious verse in the Gītā.

*yaśya nāhaṅkṛto bhāvo
buddhiryaśya na līpyate
hatvāpi sa imāmllokān—
na hanti na nibadhyate.* XVIII/17

"One who has renounced all sense of the ego, and whose reason is free from attachment, even in slaying these people (in the due performance of duty, or, these people arranged against you on this field) in fact slays not nor suffers from a bondage of any after effects due to that act". This verse is usually interpreted to mean that the person of pure reason need observe no restrictions about the rightness and wrongness of action; that one who has banished all ego-sense and has his reason free from all longing for the 'fruit' runs no risk of sin or bondage (by the consequences of his action) whatever he does; that even if he destroys the entire world or slays all beings, it in fact would amount to doing nothing on his part, and no guilt would attach to him

thereby¹. To interpret the verse in this manner, amounts to accepting the non-egoistic and egoless attitude as the sole moral criterion according to the Gītā. However, its view, as seen before, is not so restricted but also includes a due consideration of the rightness of the act. It is obvious that the present verse too must be carrying an import consistent with it.

In this connection it is necessary to ascertain the precise implication of the expression *imān lokān* ('these people') occurring in this verse. It is sometimes taken to mean the entire animate world, or at least the whole of humanity. And then, it is possible to derive from this verse the sense that since such a non-egoistic person is not liable to any guilt or bondage even when destroying or slaying the entire living world—which is obviously an utterly condemnable act from the ordinary viewpoint—there is no question of any guilt in his case about other lesser deeds. And thus it seems to lend very good support to the view that once the reason gives up attachment for 'fruit' as also the ego-sense, one need not bother whether his act is right or wrong. But it does not seem correct to interpret the expression 'these people' in such a manner. In this concluding part of his discourse Kṛṣṇa is again assuring Arjuna of the absence of sin in waging that particular war. In this light the said expression will be easily seen to mean 'these persons standing here in battle array against you.'² Kṛṣṇa had already said in the previous cantos that a war against those persons on that field was a right one and a necessary part of the inevitable course of destiny as invited by the misdeeds of those persons themselves. He is therefore now adding in this verse that

1. See e.g. Tilak, *op. cit.*, chap XV para 2; as also several other writers. Gandhi too gives a laboured interpretation of it (vide *The Gītā According to Gandhi*, pp. 365-66). ¹ Instead of accepting that this verse cannot be reconciled with the view of extreme non-violence, he says that like the geometrical line the Gītā has here described an imaginary ideal applicable only to God, and that it is not for man to attempt to follow it. As a matter of fact, there is little superhuman in this verse, its central idea being that there is nothing wrong in fighting with a non-egoistic and egoless attitude a righteous war inevitable in the pursuit of duty.

2. It is worth noting here that Rāmānuja has confined the interpretation of this verse to that specific war.

there was no risk of any bondage if that war was fought with a non-egoistic and egoless attitude.

A look at the following verses in the eleventh canto will also throw light on the above expression *imān lokān*. On the occasion of the vision of the Cosmic Reality the Lord says: 'I am the (eternal) Time-spirit (*kāla*), Death; the destructive aspect of *brahman*, the destroyer of the worlds, appearing in all the magnitude; and have come forth at this place to annihilate the *lokān* i. e. people (assembled here). None of the combatants here in these armies shall escape death, even without you (even if you resolve not to fight against them)—XI/32. Therefore arise, obtain glory, and vanquishing the foes enjoy a prosperous kingdom. These have been already slain by myself; you now play the part, Arjuna, of its mere outward occasion (instrumental cause)—33. Drona, Bhīṣma, Jayadratha, Karna, and so also the other warriors have been already slain (i. e. have their death decreed) by me. You slay them without hesitation; do not feel distressed (by the fear of sin); wage this war; you will conquer the enemy on this field—34.' It will be clear from these observations as to the killing of which 'people' Kṛṣṇa was speaking in the verse under consideration. The death of those persons standing for battle against Arjuna on that field having been already decreed by the Lord himself 'for the protection of the good and the re-establishment of righteousness' (IV/8), there was no risk of any sin if their death was brought about with a non-egoistic and egoless attitude, regarding oneself merely as an instrument of that divine purpose. Such is the import of the said verse. It does not appear to refer to the destruction of the entire living world as such. Thus even this verse does not render the right-wrong discrimination unnecessary. Even if one wants to act in accordance with this verse, it would be first essential to ascertain that the intended act is a right one; and if it is so, it would be better to perform it with a non-egoistic and egoless attitude than otherwise.

Right-wrong discrimination even by a 'viṣkāmā' person.

Had Kṛṣṇa's view really been that a non-egoistic and egoless person remains forever untouched by any guilt even on

destroying the entire sentient creation, why should he have expressed in the third canto his special anxiety to keep himself quite immune from that same taint? There can hardly be any question about the thoroughly non-egoistic, pure and egoless attitude of Lord Kṛṣṇa himself, the exponent of the Gītā gospel and master of *yoga*. As he himself points out, actions do not bind him, nor does he entertain any longing for the fruit thereof (IV/14). It being so, on the interpretation of the above-referred writers, there should be no reason for Kṛṣṇa to feel any concern over being the cause of the annihilation of anybody. But actually we find him expressing the concern that if he ceases to duly act, 'these worlds' would be ruined; and he would be responsible for the destruction of 'these peoples' (III/24). This means that in spite of his extremely unattached egoless attitude, even Kṛṣṇa is anxious that his conduct may not unnecessarily cause the destruction of any one. That being so, how could he direct others to feel unconcerned in that respect? Therefore, even if *imān lokān* in the present verse is taken to mean 'this entire sentient creation' or 'the entire humanity', still the expression 'in slaying these people' should be understood as subject to the idea 'whenever it is right i.e. inevitable for ultimate good'. With that qualification, there will remain little justification for an exclusive emphasis on the non-egoistic attitude and the total rejection of the right-wrong discrimination. And not to do so would, on the contrary, open the door for a distortion—and at times a very dangerous one—of that verse.

Let us consider here one further point. We have urged the necessity for even the non-egoistic person to observe the right-wrong distinction. Referring to it, it may perhaps be objected that it is no body's contention that such a person may go on performing evil acts, what is maintained being that wrong conduct is in fact not possible at all on the part of such a person. Why should one who has given up all longing for the 'fruit', perform an evil act? If the very desire of a wrong act cannot possibly arise in his mind where is the significance of the right-wrong discrimination for him?

But this argument contains a fallacy. It says that with the disappearance of selfishness the performance of a wrong act is impossible. This assumes that wrong action originates only in selfishness. We have however examined in the First Part the different varieties of *moha*, and shown that in spite of the reason being non-egoistic and without any longing for the 'fruit', one can happen to perform a wrong act due to the confusion of the deliberative reason. Indeed, Arjuna's own *moha*, which occasioned the Gītā discourse, was of the non-egoistic type. It is needless to go over all that discussion again. Even for an unselfish person it is not impossible to perform a wrong act due to intellectual confusion.

Need for an objective moral standard.

To those who maintain the impossibility of a non-egoistic person ever performing wrong action, one would like to ask as to how they define a wrong act. It will be found that they assume from the very start that whatever is done with a non-egoistic attitude is right and that done with an egoistic attitude is wrong. With such definitions, there is of course the appearance of proving that a non-egoistic person can never happen to perform a wrong act. But it can be hardly logical to thus beg the question. Pressed further as to their grounds for treating everything done non-egoistically as right, they would just refer to the impossibility of a non-egoistic person ever performing a wrong act. It all thus amounts to a circular argument. But when it is seen that a wrong act is possible in spite of the non-egoistic attitude, the unsoundness of this circle stands exposed. The non-egoistic attitude, or personal non-attachment for the 'fruit' of action, is but a subjective criterion. Any reference to an objective criterion in defining a right act would show the untenability of the view that a wrong act is impossible on the part of a non-egoistic person.

Nor will it avail to urge here that no one is in fact truly *niskāma* so long as there is the least possibility of a wrong action on his part. For, just as we sought above the definition of wrong action, it would suffice here to ask for the precise definition of this expression. If it is taken to

mean total desirelessness, a complete absence of all desires, no voluntary action with such a mental state would be at all possible. If, however, it is taken in the sense of the lack of egoistic desire such a non-egoistic attitude by itself would not completely bar the way of wrong action due to intellectual confusion. Of course if the *niṣkāma* attitude is taken to include both unselfishness as also proper knowledge of the rightness of action, it is true that a person with such an attitude would invariably perform right action. But would it not mean that in thus interpreting that expression, the above one-sided view has been abandoned in favour of the one advocated in the present thesis? If such a twofold interpretation is to be put upon the *niṣkāma* attitude, there would be little objection to accept it as an adequate standard of morality.

To sum up, it is hardly possible to raise the structure of any consistent system of ethics purely on the subjective non-egoistic attitude, or the personal non-attachment for the 'fruit' of action. At any rate the ethics of the Gītā is not of that onesided nature. Realising full well what distortions and confusions would result in human affairs in the name of the non-egoistic attitude, were it recognised as the exclusive moral standard, the author of the Gītā has duly emphasized the rightness of action along with its non-egoistic aspect. It will be clear from such observations as 'Therefore always perform, with an attitude of non-attachment, the *kārya* (right act)' (III/19), and '(He is the true *saṁnyāsin* and the *yogin* too) who performs the *kārya* (right) act without any personal attachment for the action and its fruit' (VI/1). And therefore, notwithstanding all the emphasis on the non-egoistic and egoless attitude, Kṛṣṇa also clearly insisted from the beginning to the end on Arjuna's performance of the one specific act, viz. that war, which was the right one in the then circumstances. And similarly, when after listening to the discourse Arjuna expresses his gratitude in verse XVIII/73, he too does not mean that he had thereby become completely non-egoistic, egoless and free from all personal attachment for the 'fruit'. On the contrary, his chief implication

at that place is, as already pointed out in the third chapter, that 'the *moha* (bewilderment) about duty and non-duty, of the nature of ignorance, that had cropped up in his mind and made him oppose that war which was his essential duty at that moment, was removed and consequently he was ready to perform that duty.'¹

CHAPTER XV

GITA'S 'YOGA' OF EQUANIMOUS REASON

Place of action in ideal life : two contrary stands.

Out of the two fundamental problems of ethics mentioned at the commencement of the twelfth chapter, the first has been so far discussed and we now turn to the other. What is the ideal way of leading the human life? Should it consist only of the contemplation of knowledge or the performance of action too? Few would deny the necessity of action prior to the attainment of knowledge; but it has been a disputable point whether after the attainment of true knowledge, with the heart thoroughly purified and all ignorance removed, one should continue action in the sphere of worldly life.

Śaṅkara's view about the place of action in the perfect life is well known. While action is necessary for the heart's purification prior to the stage of knowledge, nevertheless the further stage and final goal are exclusively concerned with knowledge involving the renunciation of all action. Once good action cleanses the heart of all impurities making it fit for the contemplation of knowledge, it must itself also vanish. Śaṅkara finds this view advocated not only in the other works on Vedānta philosophy, but in the Gītā too. He maintains that though Arjuna has been directed to perform the act of the war, it was because he was not fit for the path of knowledge as such; whereas for the enlightened one the Gītā prescribes the renunciation of all action. Interpreting from this viewpoint, the celebrated observation of Kṛṣṇa *karmayogā-dhīkāraste* (II/47) "your right extends only to (the performance of) action" is thus explained by Śaṅkara, "your right extends only to (the performance of) action *not to the pursuit of knowledge*."¹ And his follower Madhusūdana expands it in still plainer terms, "Lacking the requisite purity of

the heart and therefore being unfit for the dawn of metaphysical knowledge, your right extends only to the heart-purifying (performance of) action and therefore to an instruction of your precise duty, but not to the contemplation of the metaphysical (*vedānta*) principles in the pursuit of knowledge."¹ According to this view, Arjuna being then of impure heart and consequently unfit for spiritual knowledge was entitled only to the pursuit of action. Obviously it follows that wherever the Gītā directs the renunciation of action, it is not for Arjuna but for one entitled to pursue the path of knowledge. The followers of this school thus divide the Gītā gospel into two parts, one meant for the unenlightened persons like Arjuna and the other for those fit for the path of pure contemplation.

As against this, Tilak maintains that the Gītā forbids or at any rate treats as secondary the renunciation of all action, and delivers the message of *karma-yoga*, i.e. lifelong pursuit of (non-egoistic) action, for one and all, whether ignorant, seekers after knowledge or the fully enlightened ones. An actual abandonment of action is never proper; nor possible too. The only point is that while the common man performs action with an egoistic motive, the enlightened should do the same non-egoistically. The true *sanyāsa* is only an abandonment of the desire for the 'fruit' of action.

Reviewing these two contrary standpoints we have to ascertain here what direction the Gītā in fact imparts in this connection.

The Gītā does not advocate actual abandonment of all actions.

The first thing to be noted is that the ideal life according to the Gītā does not seem to be of the nature of the abandonment of all action as such. The view that the Gītā has preached two different paths, that of action for the ignorant, and of its renunciation for the enlightened,

1. *te tavāśuddhānta-hāraṇasya tātṛvika-jñānopapadyogasya karmayogānta-ikarṇaśo-dhākedhikāro mayedam kartavyamiti bodho'stu na jñānamiśhārāpe vedāntarā-kyavācārādau.*

1. *tava ca karmayogādhīkāro na jñānamiśhāyām.*

is not tenable on close scrutiny. The idea that even the man of knowledge ought not to eschew action as such is clearly indicated in the Gītā. Tilak's stand on that point is unsatisfactory, and his contribution to the Gītā's interpretation in that respect is without doubt of signal importance. It does not appear a sound view that Arjuna was directed to wage the war just because he was unfit for knowledge. Those who advocate complete absence of action in the post-enlightenment stage, usually rely on the following reference to the supreme status of knowledge:

*sarvaṁ karmākḥilam pārtha
jñāne parisamāpyate
yathaidhānī samiddho'gnir-
bhasmasātkurute'ṛjuna
jñānāgnih sarvakarmāṇi
bhasmasātkurute tathā.*

IV/33

IV/37

"....Arjuna, all action whatever finds its termination in knowledge—IV/33. Just as the kindled fire reduces fuelpieces to ashes, so does the fire of knowledge reduce all actions to ashes—IV/37." But it is noteworthy that at the same place there also occurs the clear direction for the performance of action. True, at the end of the fourth canto we find the greatness of knowledge stressed in the words:

*yogasannyastakarmāṇaṁ
jñānasāñcīhīmasaṁśayam
ātmavantaṁ na karmāṇi
nibadhnanti dhanarājaya.*

IV/41

"Arjuna, him actions do not bind who has renounced all action by means of the *yoga* attitude (of equanimity), has cleared all doubts through knowledge and has realised the self."¹ But thereafter it is immediately added, "Therefore,

1. It is obvious that the first quarter of this verse does not indicate the actual abandonment of action. For, the next verse commencing with *tasmat* ('therefore') with reference to this verse contains a direction for the act of war. The reference here is to the supreme *yoga* state which includes the performance of right action even after the elimination of all attachment for action.

cutting off with the sword of knowledge this doubt in your mind, born of ignorance, adopt the *yoga* attitude (of equanimity); and stand up (for this war)—IV/42".

Arjuna has here been asked to attain that highest knowledge, to adopt the supreme *yoga* attitude and yet with all that to 'stand up'! This last expression means 'stand up for the war; even Śaṅkara himself has explained it in the same light.¹ After attaining the knowledge accompanied by the spiritual insight to 'behold all beings in God as also in himself' (vide IV/35), and after removing with its help all ignorance in the mind, it is to stand up for the then essential duty of that war that Arjuna has here been plainly directed, and not to abandon all action. Elsewhere in his discourse too, after relating to Arjuna the sublime spiritual knowledge, and blessing him with the rarest vision of Cosmic Reality, the Lord has maintained his insistence on the same direction. And yet in explaining the last part of verse IV/42 Śaṅkara assigns that direction a secondary place, and taking it as but a preparation for the pursuit of knowledge adds: "This means, 'Adopt the *yoga* attitude i. e. the performance of action which is a means for the final realisation'.² Such an interpretation though in keeping with the specific viewpoint of Śaṅkara is hardly tenable.

Arjuna—a person with knowledge or ignorance?

Was Arjuna who was privileged to hear the Gītā gospel from the mouth of Lord Kṛṣṇa himself ignorant or possessed of knowledge? Did Kṛṣṇa look upon him as fit only for the pursuit of action but not for knowledge and initiation into the *sāñkhyā* path? A close perusal of the Gītā should easily provide a negative answer to such a question. The very commencement of Kṛṣṇa's discourse is with the exposition of the

1. *uttīṣṭha cedānīm yuddhāya he bhārata iti.*

2. *yogin saṁyagadarśanopāyaṁ karmānuṣṭhānamāñiṣṭha kurvītyarthaḥ.* The point is that to Śaṅkara no performance of action is compatible with the fully enlightened state. Action is only a preparatory means for that. He therefore interprets *yoga* at this place as the preparatory *karma-yoga* and not the final *buddhi-yoga*.

sāṅkhya school, concluding with the clear observation in verse II/38: "So far I have narrated to you the *sāṅkhya* viewpoint." Subsequently too, after explaining the supreme status of final spiritual knowledge, Kṛṣṇa nowhere adds that Arjuna himself was unfit for that knowledge. Nor may it be contended that the knowledge expounded to Arjuna in the Gītā was meant for his contemplation at some future stage of retirement. For, Kṛṣṇa has thus directly associated it with the then bewilderment of Arjuna: "Having obtained that final knowledge, Arjuna, you will no more be liable to any such *moha*" (IV/35). The knowledge was essential for the absolute removal of that bewilderment; from which it obviously follows that in Kṛṣṇa's view Arjuna was fit for the same.

Time and again Kṛṣṇa has specially brought to Arjuna's notice the sublime nature of the knowledge that was then being imparted by him.

*jñānaṁ te'haṁ savijñānaṁ-
idaṁ vakyaṁ aśeṣataḥ
yajñātā neta bhūyo'nyaj-
jñātavyam aśeṣyate.* VII/2

"I shall (now) relate to you in full this knowledge, spiritual (i.e. concerning the self) as also physical (i.e. concerning the *prakṛti* or physical nature); knowing which there remains nothing more to be known in this world."

*idaṁ tu te guhyatamaṁ
pravakṣyāmyanaśrayave
jñānaṁ vijñānaśaitaṁ
yajñātā mokṣasya'śubhat.* IX/1
*rājavidyā rājaguhyaṁ
pavitram idaṁ uttamam
pratyaśvāṅgamaṁ dharmyaṁ
susukhaṁ kartumavyayam.* IX/2

"To you, devoid of jealousy, I shall (now) relate the most secret knowledge—spiritual (i.e. concerning the self) as also physical (i.e. concerning the *prakṛti* or physical nature);

knowing which you will be released from all evil." "This is the highest learning, the profound secret, sacred, sublime, such as can be directly experienced, righteous, easily practicable, and eternal".

*paraṁ bhūyaḥ pravakṣyāmi
jñānaṁ jñānamuttamam
yajñātā munayaḥ sarve
parāṁ siddhim ito gatāḥ.* XIV/1

*idaṁ jñānam upāśrītya
mama sādharmaṁ āgatāḥ
sarge'pi nopajāyante
pralaye na vyathanti ca.* XIV/2

I shall (now) again relate to you the supreme knowledge, the most sublime of all; realising which all the sages did pass from this world to the state of highest perfection." "Those attaining on the basis of this knowledge the unity with my own being are not liable to birth even at the time of the world-creation nor to destruction at its final dissolution, i.e. are completely liberated from the cycle of births and deaths".¹ In such glowing terms has the Gītā itself described the importance of that knowledge preached to Arjuna.² And the latter too acknowledges in verse XI/1 that supreme significance of the knowledge imparted by Kṛṣṇa.

Lord Kṛṣṇa has thus preached in the Gītā the highest knowledge to Arjuna, even crowning it with the direct vision of Reality in the Cosmic Form; and it does not appear that he reserved any important aspect of it from Arjuna on the ground of the latter's unfitness for it. Arjuna has been given in the Gītā the specific direction of action, not because he was in any way unfit for knowledge as such, but because in that specific situation that act of war was quite necessary whether he was a man of ignorance or knowledge. Indeed it should be enough to remind those who see in the Gītā the dual preaching, one of action meant for the ignorant

1. See also XV/4.

2. See also XV/20.

Arjuna while of its renunciation for the persons of knowledge, that even the latter message has been addressed to Arjuna himself. It means that he was taken to be fit at least for receiving it!

With knowledge, but not perfection.

However, though Arjuna was thus possessed of knowledge as a result of the Gītā discourse, it may be conceded that in another sense he had not become an enlightened soul. It is one thing to merely listen to a discourse of knowledge; and another to completely assimilate it and mould one's attitude accordingly. The former is the initial stage of mere knowledge; the latter the final one of perfection and full enlightenment. The Gītā has aptly made a separate mention of the two. After saying in verse IV/34 that one should seek knowledge from worthy preceptors, a few verses later the Gītā observes:

*na hi jñānena sadīṣaṁ
pavitrāmiha vidyate
tatsvayam yogasāmsiddhaḥ
kalenātmani vindati. IV/38*

"In this world there is nothing as sacred as knowledge; the follower of *yoga* realises it within himself in due course of time." Unless the distinction between the initial and final stages of knowledge is kept in view, these two verses will appear inconsistent with each other. It is said in one verse that knowledge has to be obtained from some one else; whereas according to the other it has to be cultivated within oneself. While immediately on putting raw mango pieces in the solution of sugar the name jelly can in one sense be applied to the mixture, in another sense the recipe can be so called only after the sugar has been completely assimilated in the pieces in due course of time. Arjuna may have been in possession of knowledge according to the thirtyfourth verse; but he was yet to become enlightened in the sense of the thirtyeighth. The latter state is the final culmination of knowledge as also *yoga*. It is not necessarily achieved in one life; as said in verse VI/45 the attempt may have to be pursued through

several lives. In the next verse (VI/46) the *yogin* is said to be greater than even a man of (mere) knowledge.

With this distinction in view it is clear that just by listening to the Gītā discourse Arjuna had not become a fully enlightened perfect person. If this is all that is insisted by the Śaṅkara school, there may be no objection to it. It is however hardly possible to agree that Arjuna was taken as unfit for the very pursuit of the path of knowledge, or that the preaching of knowledge in the Gītā was not meant for him. If it was not for him, why was it expounded to him and that too on the field of battle?

Reference to perfection in the Gītā.

But of course if Arjuna himself had not attained the state of perfection, a final decision about the pursuit of action at that level cannot be based on his own conduct. Let us therefore better seek some other basis for determining whether at the perfect level action is obligatory, permissible, or wholly objectionable. Fortunately the Gītā clearly refers in this connection to the performance of action by one unquestionably perfect and fully enlightened personality. Indicating the compatibility of action with full enlightenment, Kṛṣṇa, the supreme master of knowledge and *yoga* cites his own example; and no amount of hairsplitting can dislodge this solid proof of Gītā's reconciliation between knowledge and action. Tilak's argument on its basis against the school of the total abandonment of all action is quite proper.¹ Though completely possessed of knowledge in all respects, and with nothing to seek for himself as such, Kṛṣṇa nevertheless scrupulously keeps on performing necessary action. "Arjuna, there is nothing in all the three worlds necessary to be done by me as such (for my own sake); nor is there anything that I lack and have to obtain. Nevertheless I do perform action" (III/22). He has again referred to his pursuit of action in verse IV/9 too. And it has also been stated in verse III/20 that the attainment of full enlightenment and perfection on the part of such liberated

1. *Op. cit.* chap XI para 11, and comments on verses III/17-24.

ones as Janaka did include performance of action. The last reference is however somewhat vague. It can mean either that Janaka and others pursued action till they attained spiritual knowledge, or that they continued it even thereafter. Śaṅkara refers to both the alternatives, but he it noted, does not specifically reject the latter.

There also occur in the Gītā some other observations pointing to the compatibility of action with perfection. See for example the following joint mention of renunciation of action and the performance of right action.

*mayi sarvāṇi karmāṇi
sannyasyādhyātmacetasā
nirāśrīrnamo bhūtvā
yuddhyasva vigatājvarah. III/30*

"Renouncing (resigning) all acts unto me with the heart enlightened by true spiritual knowledge (surrendering the authorship as also the fruit of all acts to God), and giving up all longing and attachment, wage this war without any excitement (or hesitation)". Herein, along with the direction of the renunciation of all action, Arjuna has at the same time been clearly asked to perform the necessary act of that war. Besides, one may also refer here to such observations in the Gītā as: "The sages, with their sins washed away, with their minds cleared of all doubts (or dualisms), with control over themselves, and absorbed in the pursuit of the entire creation, attain the most sublime state of brahman" (V/25); "He is the (true) *sannyāsīn* and the *yogīn* too, who performs the right act without any personal attachment for the action and its fruit." (VI/1); "the relinquishment of the duly fixed duty is not proper...." (XVIII/7).

Gītā recognises partial abandonment of action.

But if it is incorrect to trace in the Gītā the view of the abandonment of all action, no less untenable is the contrary view that according to it one should necessarily remain performing action till the last, only doing so with the non-egoistic attitude. This is how Tilak expresses the latter view: "There

are two ways of leading the life in this world by the enlightened person according to Vedic religion....of them, one is that of actual *sannyāsa* or abandonment of all acts after obtaining knowledge, while the other is, not to abandon the acts even after obtaining knowledge, but to continue the lifelong performance of the same in such a manner as not to be affected by their merit or demerit. It is with reference to these very two paths that the Gītā has later (V/2) employed the fuller expressions of *sannyāsa* and *karma-yoga*.¹ At another place we are told that according to the Gītā, "one ought, along with knowledge and sincere devotion to God, also to remain performing till death the very activities of the householder's walk of life with a non-egoistic reason."² "The Lord has preached in the Gītā the doctrine of lifelong non-egoistic action, based on knowledge and prominently characterised by devotion....; and that is the very essence of the ethics of action".³ Quite opposed to the view that the enlightened one should totally eschew action, this view states that he should remain ceaselessly performing it. According to Tilak the teaching of the Gītā centres round the doctrine of *karma-yoga*, the ceaseless lifelong pursuit of (non-egoistic) action. In the humble view of the present writer, while the ideal *yoga* state preached by the Gītā does not eschew all action as such, nevertheless action is not its most prominent characteristic. Indeed, it may even be questioned from this point of view whether the central *yoga* preached in the Gītā could be properly described as *karma-yoga*.

The Gītā does not advocate that with the attainment of enlightenment no act whatever need be actually abandoned. It does not say that once the inner attitude is cleansed of all egoistic attachment, all those acts that were formerly impeding the soul's progress can now automatically prove helpful for it and may be continued without break. Such acts as can be performed both egoistically as well as non-egoistically may be continued non-egoistically. But there are some acts that

1. *Op. cit.* chap III para 4.

2. *Op. cit.* chap XI para 16.

3. *Op. cit.* chap XV para 1.

originate exclusively in the egoistic attitude; and their continuance is out of question after its elimination. For example, it could be said that even after giving up egoistic attachment a man should continue to take his necessary diet, not for the sake of gustatory pleasure, but with the idea that the body needs due nourishment. But what is the point in saying that even any extra food that he used to take purely for the pleasures of the palate may also be continued by him non-egoistically? As soon as his attitude turns non-egoistic, that much part of the activity will totally drop out.

'*kāmyā*' and '*sakāma*' acts.

Looking from this viewpoint it seems desirable to classify acts not merely into the egoistic and non-egoistic, but rather into three categories—basically or purely egoistic (*kāmya*), egoistically performed (*sakāma*), and non-egoistic (*niskāma*). Under the first category would come such acts as are possible only with an egoistic attitude, and the performance of which has to be discarded when the agent's mind turns non-egoistic. On the other hand an act which, though capable of being performed from both viewpoints, is performed by the agent with the egoistic attitude should be included in the second category. When with the attainment of enlightenment the attitude turns non-egoistic, those of the second type can be continued with an abandonment of their 'fruit'.

Unless such a distinction is drawn between the *kāmya* or basically egoistic acts and the *sakāma* or egoistically performed acts, it would be hardly possible to interpret consistently some important verses in the Gītā. For example, see the following verse :

kāmyānāṃ karmaṇāṃ nyāsaṃ
sanyāsaṃ kavayo viduḥ
sarvakarmaphalatyāgaṃ
prāhuḥśyāgaṃ vitakṣaṇāḥ. XVIII/2

"The relinquishment of the *kāmya* acts is called *sanyāsa* ('renunciation') by the learned men; whereas the abandonment of the 'fruit' of all action is called *tyāga* ('abandon-

ment') by the experts (learned)." In the preceding verse (XVIII/1) Arjuna has expressed his desire for knowing separately the fundamental nature of *sanyāsa* (renunciation) and *tyāga* (abandonment). Its reply commences with the above verse; *sanyāsa* is defined in its first part, *tyāga* in the second. A careful perusal of it will indicate that it disapproves both the renunciation of all action as such, and also the unqualified pursuit of all actions. This verse says that in principle the real *tyāga* or abandonment means the abandonment of the 'fruit' of all action. But with such an 'abandonment', some acts actually drop out, i. e. in their case a literal *sanyāsa* (renunciation) takes place. However in the case of some others, a performance with only an abandonment of the 'fruit' is possible and desirable; an actual renunciation of theirs not being proper. In verse XVIII/7 the Gītā forbids the relinquishment of only the 'duly fixed' acts; not of all acts whatever. And the same point is expressed from the opposite angle in the first line of the present verse by directing the relinquishment of the 'wholly egoistic' (*kāmya*) acts. Reading together these two statements, it follows that some acts (viz. the 'wholly egoistic' ones) ought to be actually relinquished, while some others (the 'duly fixed' or right ones) should not be.

If the term *nyāsa* ('relinquishment') in the first line is taken to mean the abandonment of only the desire for 'fruit' (and not the act itself); there would remain no distinction between the definitions in the two lines. Arjuna however is seeking to know *separately* the principles underlying *sanyāsa* and *tyāga*. Therefore, taking the word *nyāsa* in the sense of an 'actual relinquishment', the first line may be said to advocate the actual abandonment of some (viz. the basically egoistic) acts, whereas the second the abandonment of the desire for the 'fruit' of all action. In this sense, while *sanyāsa* is possible with reference only to some acts, *tyāga* is applicable to all; and therefore the second line aptly speaks of the abandonment of the fruit of all action. With such abandonment, the basically egoistic acts totally drop out. On the other hand, those that are not so need not be actually dropped, but may be continued with a non-egoistic attitude.

This will refute the view that according to the Gītā once the fruit is abandoned there is no need to actually relinquish any act, *all* of them being continued as before.

Action in its individual and collective aspects.

There is however a further fallacy in the idea that with the abandonment of the fruit there remains no need of actually dropping out any act. It confuses the individual act with its species. Even if the abandonment of the fruit may not affect a species of action, an individual act belonging to that species may have to be dropped out. With the abandonment of the fruit of action, though the non-egoistic continuance of any species of action under certain circumstances may remain theoretically possible, nevertheless a person in whose case those circumstances do not exist will have to drop his own act of that type altogether.

Here is an illustration. Suppose a man spends a considerable time every day in playing cards just for his pleasure. Now on renouncing the egoistic mode of life, may he continue that act non-egoistically or must he give it up? But what is meant by playing cards with a non-egoistic attitude? It will be so if the cards are played with a sense of duty e. g. for the necessary recreation of some convalescent patient. This means that even on the abandonment of the fruit of action, playing cards as such need not be affected, only its motive being changed. But the important point here is that this would be true of card-playing considered only as a species of action. Its non-egoistic performance being possible in certain circumstances, the species as such can retain a place in the list of possible moral actions. And yet, so far as a man who is not placed in those special circumstances, he of course (on adopting the non-egoistic attitude) will have to altogether give up that act. How will one who has no such patient nearabout continue to play cards in a non-egoistic manner?

That the actual relinquishment of action is in this sense acceptable to the Gītā is also clear from one more verse. While explaining *tyāga* Kṛṣṇa first refers to the different views on the point and observes:

tyājyaṁ doṣavadyiyeke
karma prāhurmanīṣiṇaḥ
yajñādānatapaḥkarma
na tyājyamiti cāpare. XVIII/3

“Some wise men maintain that action as such being of evil nature should be (altogether) abandoned; while others hold that the acts of sacrifice, charity and penance ought not to be abandoned”. Thereafter proceeding to state his own view on the point he adds:

yajñādānatapaḥkarma
na tyājyaṁ kāryameva tat
yajño dānaṁ tapaścaiva
pāvanāni manīṣiṇām. XVIII/5

etānyapi tu karmāni
saṁgaṁ tyaktvā phalāni ca
kartavyānīti me pārtha
nīścitaṁ matamuttamam. XVIII/6

“The acts of sacrifice, charity and penance are without doubt *kārya* (right, which ought to be performed); and may not be abandoned. Sacrifice, charity and penance serve as purifiers for the wise—XVIII/5. However, even these acts are to be performed without attachment for them and their fruit. That, Arjuna, is definitely the best view according to me—6”. While discarding the view that all action whatsoever ought to be abandoned, Kṛṣṇa however does not go to the other extreme that no act need be given up. He specifies the acts which should not be abandoned. In the above verses the Gītā recommends the continuation of such action as is of the nature of Sacrifice, Charity or Penance, using these terms in a broad sense¹. The same direction will be found in verses VII/28, XVII/24 and 25. Besides the above trio, common to all men,

1. The various forms of sacrifice are mentioned in the fourth canto, verses 23 to 33. The varieties of penance are given in the seventeenth canto, verses 14, 15, 16.

Kṛṣṇa adds in XVIII/7 and 9 that one should not also abandon his duly appointed duties (*nityata karma*). Clearly acts not falling in any of these specified categories are liable to be abandoned with the dawn of the non-egoistic attitude and mental equanimity.

The supreme 'yoga' state.

We have thus seen that the ideal life according to the Gītā implies the actual renunciation of some acts. Even if one insists on the ceaseless pursuit of action in the post-enlightenment stage, he can not continue all those very acts that he was performing before egoistically, but will have to replace at least some of them by other right ones. And apart from that, coming to the more fundamental point, one does not find the Gītā insisting on the unbroken lifelong pursuit of action. Would not the insistence on such a pursuit after all amount to an attachment for activity itself, if not for the fruit? The Gītā however clearly directs the elimination of attachment for both the fruit as also the act. It contains a separate mention of these two types of non-attachment.

*yadā hi nendriyārtheṣu
na karmasvanuṣṅgāte
sarvasaṅkalpasamyāstī
yogārūḍhastadocyate. VI/4*

"When the seeker renounces all egoistic ideas (*saṅkalpa*) and remains unattached for the sense-objects and for the actions (too), he is said to have (fully) attained the state of *yoga*". Besides this, the separate mention of attachment for the act and the 'fruit' in verses III/30, IV/14, XVIII/6 and XVIII/9 also deserves attention. For the ideal life it will not suffice to have non-attachment merely for the fruit; it is necessary to have the same for the act too. Taking all this into consideration, let us now indicate the broad characteristics of the supreme *yoga* state preached in the Gītā.

THE YOGA STATE OF THE GĪTĀ consists neither of the abandonment of all action nor again of its necessary performance. There is no insistence on either of these. That

supreme state connotes absolute equanimity of the soul; viewing all beings with an equal eye, without any distinctions on personal grounds. It is the sublime state of perfect tranquility bereft of all attachment, fear, anger and the like. The uniformly equanimous attitude transcending all dualisms enters the state of pure bliss. He who attains it is perfectly equipoised at heart not only in respect of such matters as pleasure and pain, honour and dishonour, friend and foe, but even the basic dualism of action and non-action. If action is necessary in the prevailing circumstances, he will perform it without any eye on the 'fruit', and without any ego-sense; but at the same time with due regard to the consequences. Otherwise, absorbed in spiritual meditation he will remain perfectly content within himself.

At several places throughout the Gītā its author has described in matchless words the ideal personality and its virtues. It will be worth while giving here some extracts even at the cost of a little repetition. The ideal person renounces all egoistic desires and remains content within himself (II/55). Never ruffled by sorrow or having any longing for pleasure, he is free from attachment, fear and anger (II/56; XV/5). He has no affection for anything, and feels neither any elation nor aversion whatever happy or unhappy event comes to pass (II/57). With his senses under complete control he remains devotionally meditating on God (II/61; XV/19). He attains perfect inward peace; the egoistic desires entering his mind in the same fashion in which the waters of the rivers enter the vast ocean without disturbing its level (II/70). With no special interest in the performance of any act, nor even in its non-performance, he entertains no personal expectations from any one whatever (III/18). All his activities are devoid of egoistic attachment; and his personal initiative for action is completely rooted out as a result of true knowledge (IV/19). He is ever contented, depending (for his contentment) on no external object, and renounces all attachment for the act as also its fruit; as a result of which even while performing an act he verily does nothing (IV/20). Ever reconciled with whatever he happens to get, he transcends all sense of dualism, is devoid of any feeling of jealousy, and looks with an equal

eye on success or failure; and is not bound (by any after-effects of action) even when he performs an act (IV/22). He does not get puffed up with joy on obtaining a favourable object nor is down with gloom on obtaining an unfavourable one, attains steadfastness of reason, is not susceptible to *moha*, and is possessed of the true knowledge of the *brahman*; indeed he is therefore himself established in the being of the *brahman* (V/20). He performs the right act without any egoistic motive (VI/1). Renouncing all egoistic desires he remains unattached to the sense-objects as also the actions (VI/4). Having conquered himself and attaining perfect peace of mind he remains evenly balanced in cold and heat, pleasure and pain, honour and humiliation (VI/7). He regards all alike, whether well-wishers, friends, relations, enemies, neutrals, mediators, the wicked, good men or sinners (VI/9). Viewing all around with an equanimous eye, he realises himself in all beings and all beings in himself (VI/29). With perfect control over the entire sense-complex, and an evenly balanced attitude in all directions, he is absorbed in pursuing the good of all beings (XII/4). He harbours illwill for none, is all-friendly and kindhearted, devoid of egoism as well as ego-sense, treats joy and sorrow alike, and is full of soft forgiveness (XII/13). Perfectly calm at heart, he attaches the same value to a piece of clay, stone and gold, accepts alike what he likes and what he dislikes, and remains equally unaffected by praise or censure (XIV/24).

Without doubt, such a state of absolute equanimity is extremely difficult to attain. Out of thousands hardly a solitary man makes a sincere effort after it; and out of thousands of such seekers hardly one succeeds in the attempt (vide VII/3). However, by long and persistent effort it is attainable, may be by pursuing it through successive lives. The attainment of that state means final release from the cycle of births and deaths, and entry in the *brahman*.

ihaiva tairjitaḥ sargo

yeṣāṃ sāmye sthitaṃ manaḥ

nirdoṣaṃ hi samaṃ brahma

tasmādbrahmaṇi te sthitaḥ.

V/19

“Those whose mind is firmly established in the supreme equanimity overcome the life (cycle) of births and deaths even here in this world. The *brahman* being flawless and perfectly equanimous, such persons (of equanimous soul) are (verily) established in the *brahman* itself.” With reference to this ideal equanimity of the heart the Gītā employs the following apt analogy:

yathā dīpo nivāstho

neṅgate sopamā smṛtā

yogino yatacittasya

yuyūjato yogamāmanah.

VI/19

“As the flame in a windless place does not flicker, so may be described the controlled mind of the *yogī* firmly established in the supremely equanimous state of self-meditation.”¹ Having attained this state there remains nothing else to be attained.

yam labdhvā cāparam lābham

manyate nādhikam tataḥ

yasmīnsthito na duḥkheṇa

guruṇāpi vicālyate.

VI/22

“On attaining that state no other gain is considered superior to it; wherein once established one is not moved even by a major catastrophe.”

When one who has attained this supreme state performs an action, it is not due to a liking or longing for it, but because it is necessary in the prevailing circumstances. If there is an ailing patient nearabout, he will attend on him; but would not otherwise go out in search of patients to maintain in unbroken continuity his pursuit of non-egoistic action. According to the Gītā the *yogin*, when no particular action is called for in the circumstances, remains thus—

yogī yuyūjita satatam

ātmānam rahasi sthitaḥ

1. Elsewhere also in the Mahābhārata this analogy is employed in this connection. Vide Śānti Parva, 246/11, 306/18, 316/19.

ekāki yatacittātmā
nirāśīraparigrahaḥ.

VI/10

“The *yogī* should forever remain firmly established in the state of *yoga* (of the nature of the supremely equanimous meditation), resorting to solitude by himself, with perfect control over the body and mind, and abandoning all worldly desires and longings.” From this point of view, though performing right action as called for by the circumstances, in principle all action—not only the desire for ‘fruit’ but even the tendency to action—is eliminated from his heart. He is one “who has renounced all action by means of the *yoga* attitude (of equanimity)” (IV/41). In his heart all motivation for action terminates in the spiritual knowledge of the true self. Though performing right action if required by the situation, inwardly he remains a non-doer. The fire of knowledge burns away all action in his heart from the very root (vide IV/37). It is the final culmination and merger of the paths of knowledge and action, of *sāṅkhya* and *yoga*, of the renunciation of action and its performance.

‘*Yoga*’ means ‘*buddhiyoga*’, not ‘*karmayoga*’.

In the Gītā this state of supreme equanimity has been repeatedly described merely as *yoga*, not as *karma-yoga*. The latter expression occurs only at four places—III/3, III/7, V/2 and XIII/24. Out of them in verses III/3, V/2 and XIII/24 *karmayoga* is mentioned as one of several desirable paths. It does not appear to have been employed in the sense of the ultimate state of supreme equanimity expounded in the Gītā after a reconciliation of the various paths of Liberation. Verse III/3 reads as follows:

loke’ sminduvīdhā niṣṭhā
purā proktā mayānagha
jñānyogena sāṅkhyānām
karmayogena yoginām. III/3

“Arjuna, I have formerly spoken of two types of convictions (regarding the true good) prevalent in this world: that of the *sāṅkhya* persons through the path of knowledge (*jñānyoga*), and

that of the *yogin* persons through the path of action (*karmayoga*).” Here *karmayoga* is said to be but one of the two paths prevalent in the society for reaching the final goal. It follows that though the path of *karmayoga* is initially pursued by some, it is to be finally transcended. The same is also indicated in verses VI/3 and 46.

Now, verse III/7 is as follows :

yastindriyāni manasā
niyamārabhate’rjuna
karmendriyaiḥ karmayogam
asaktaḥ sa viśiṣyate.

“Arjuna, he excels in eminence who controls the senses by his mind, and without attachment commences (pursues) the path of action (*karmayoga*) through the organs of action”. This also only shows that the pursuit of *karmayoga* is here recommended as a better path for attaining the final ‘state of actionlessness (release from action)’ (*niṣkarmyam*), or ‘the state of perfection’ (*siddhi*) mentioned in III/4. It does not mean that *karmayoga* itself is the final goal. The verse can mean (in the light of the preceding verse III/6) that the follower of *karmayoga* is better than a hypocrite, who outwardly refrains from action but inwardly remains brooding over the sense-objects. And besides, it would not do to overlook the expression ‘without attachment’ (*asaktaḥ*) qualifying the pursuit of *karmayoga* in the above verse. The reference is thus not to the mere pursuit of the path of action, but to that pursuit with an attitude of complete non-attachment. If this qualification is taken to suggest the elimination of attachment even for the performance of action, it would indicate a state of mind and reason higher than that associated with *karmayoga* as commonly interpreted. Further, as for verse V/2, though it declares *karmayoga* as superior to the renunciation of action, it regards the former as only ‘leading to the final spiritual good (salvation)’. It means that *karmayoga* is a means to that final state and not that state itself. Finally in verse XIII/24, *karmayoga* is again mentioned as one of the several desirable paths. After the thirteenth canto the expression *karmayoga* occurs nowhere.

On the other hand, the author of the Gītā himself has employed another distinct term with reference to the supreme state of *yoga*. At the very outset in verses II/49, 50 and 51 he designates it as *buddhiyoga* i.e. the *yoga* of (equanimous) reason, thus indicating its distinctness from mere *karmayoga*. But besides that, there are also the following unambiguous references to the same.

*teṣāṁ satatayuktānāṁ
bhagatām pritiṭṭhuvākam
dadāmi buddhiyogam taṁ
yena māmupayānti te.* X/10

"Those, ever absorbed in loving devotion (of mine i.e. God), I bless with *buddhiyoga* (the *yoga* state of equanimous reason) with which they reach me." And in concluding his discourse Kṛṣṇa again repeats:

*cetasā sarvakarmāṇi
mayi sannyasya matparaḥ
buddhiyogamupāśritya
macchittah satatam bhava.* XVIII/67

"Inwardly renouncing all acts unto me, with devotion for me, and resorting to *buddhiyoga* concentrate your mind for all time in me." Here the *yoga* preached in the Gītā is distinctly designated as *buddhiyoga*. Actually the Gītā's central *yoga* of reason transcends the *yoga* of action as such; though it also includes the performance of the right act.

That the Gītā's *yoga* is not necessarily the ceaseless pursuit of action, but essentially connotes the state of inward absolute equanimity, is also clear from some more observations. We have already referred above to some verses in the sixth canto describing that state. Besides those, Kṛṣṇa also observes:

*taṁ vidyādḍhukha samyoga-
vīyogam yogasarijñitam
sa niscayena yuktavyo
yogo'nirvīnacetasā.* VI/23

"That state of (total) disassociation from pain (the complete absence of sorrow) should be known by the name *yoga*. This *yoga* deserves to be pursued with a firm determination and an untiring heart." Here the characteristic of the complete absence of all pain applies more fittingly to the *buddhiyoga*, rather than *karmayoga* preaching the lifelong pursuit of action. After listening to the excellent account of that state, Arjuna also expresses the same idea about *yoga*: "I am afraid, Kṛṣṇa, that due to the mind's unsteadiness this *yoga* of (absolute inward) equanimity which thou hast preached may not be stabilised." (VI/33). These words obviously refer to *buddhiyoga*. It would be a mistake to treat this state of absolute inward equanimity, the supreme spiritual message imparted by the Gītā, as but a means for the *karmayoga*.

more verse:

*ānuruksorṃmuneryogaṁ
karma kāraṇamucyate
yogārūḍhasya tasyaiva
samahī kāraṇamucyate. VI/3*

“Of him who is seeking to cultivate the *yoga* state, activity is the indication (essential or distinguishing characteristic); when however the same person has (fully) attained the *yoga* state, serene tranquillity of the soul becomes the indication.” This compares the seeker with one who has attained perfection in the pursuit of *yoga*, and points out the distinguishing features of both. In the former stage action has to be deliberately pursued with a non-egoistic attitude. It purifies the seeker’s mind. However, when full equanimity has been attained and the reason stabilised, such deliberate pursuit of action is no more necessary. It is then enough to maintain serene inward tranquillity. Right action will be performed at that stage whenever necessary, but without any insistence on it. While the abandonment of the desire for ‘fruit’ is implied at the seeker’s stage also, relinquishment of attachment even for the action as such is the speciality of the stage of perfection. Citing his own example in this respect Kṛṣṇa observes:

*na ca mām tāni karmāṇi
nibadhnanti dhanatīya
udāsīnavadāsīnaṁ
asaktam teṣu karmasu. IX/9*

“Arjuna, as I entertain no attachment towards those acts (of world creation etc.), maintaining an attitude of indifference (personal disinterestedness), those acts do not bind me in any manner.” If the *yoga* preached in the Gītā is to be designated as the *yoga* of non-attachment, it ought to cover the non-attachment not only for the fruit but for the action also (VI/4).

Transcending the three qualities.

When in this light one considers ‘the state of transcending the three qualities (of *prakṛti*)’ described in the

CHAPTER XVI

SOME PROBLEM VERSES IN THE GĪTĀ

It now remains to see in this closing chapter how the overall standpoint adopted in this work leads to a clear and consistent understanding of many an enigmatic verse of the Gītā thus pointing all the more to the presence of one definite theme running through this sublime philosophical discourse.

Supreme place of ‘yoga’.

The *yoga* state preached in the Gītā, as said before, essentially involves neither a pursuit nor an abandonment of action as such. While including the necessary performance of action, it is only its occasional feature. Its essential characteristic is the unshaking equanimity transcending all sense of dualism. Referring to it the Gītā observes:

*tapasvibhyo’dhiko yogī
jñānibhyo’pi mato’dhikah
karmibhyaścādhiko yogī
tasnādyogī bhavārjuna. VI/46*

“The *yogī* is greater than one who (merely) practises austerities, greater even than one who (merely) possesses knowledge, and again greater than one given to action. Arjuna, be therefore a *yogī*”. Howsoever one might practise austerities, obtain knowledge or pursue action, the final goal will not be attained until the soul becomes tranquil and equanimous, assumes the steadiness of the flame burning in a windless place. This verse clearly assigns a secondary status to the pursuit of mere knowledge; and so too to the pursuit of mere action.

Tranquillity in place of activity on attaining ‘yoga.’

The same idea has been expressed in the Gītā in one

fourteenth canto, its significance can be better appreciated. Otherwise one fails to quite realise the precise distinction between the stage of the *sattva* quality, and that of transcendence over all the three qualities. Promising to relate the highest knowledge leading to perfection, Kṛṣṇa first describes in the said canto the specific characteristics of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, and then repeats the direction (already given in verse II/45) to rise above all those three. In this account *tamas* is related to bewilderment, *rajas* to craving and *sattva* to knowledge. While the man of *sattva* nature is superior to those of *rajas* and *tamas*, nevertheless the Gītā does not regard the *sattva* state as the final one. The ideal state rises still higher, transcending all the three qualities. What is its special feature by which it surpasses even the *sattva* nature?

*nānyam guṇebhyaḥ kartāraṁ
yadā draṣṭānuṣṭyati
guṇebhyaśca paraṁ veti
madbhāvam so'dhigacchati.* XIV/19

"When the seer perceives no other agent but the three qualities (viz. *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*), and realises that which lies beyond the three qualities, he attains my being." When even the sense of oneself as the doer (present at the *sattva* stage) dies away, and all attachment for the 'fruit' and also for action as such is eliminated, one attains transcendence over the three qualities. Howsoever superior the *sattva* state might be within the three qualities, even that results in bondage for the soul.

*sattvaṁ rajastama itī
guṇāḥ prakṛtisambhavāḥ
nibadhnanti mahābāho
dehe dehīnamavyayam.* XIV/5

*tatra sattvaṁ nirmalatāt
prakāśakamanāmayaṁ
sukhasaṅgena badhnāti
jñānasāṅgena cānagha.* 6

"Arjuna, the three qualities viz. *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, born of *prakṛti* bind the imperishable self to the body—XVI/5.

Of them, *sattva* which due to its pure nature is luminous and flawless binds (the soul) with attachment for happiness and knowledge—6". Dying while in the *sattva* state, the soul passes to the happy abodes from which however a return is inevitable sooner or later (XIV/14, 18); but the transcendence of all the three qualities will take it to the perennial state itself (XIV/19, 20, 26). The *yogī* transcending the three qualities is one who has renounced all initiative for action *sarvārambhaparivyāgi* (XIV/25); though performing the duty necessary in the prevailing circumstances there is no insistence within him for the pursuit of action. In all such matters his attitude is 'one resembling indifference' (XIV/23).

This sublime unconcern is suggested in the Gītā at one more place through the following paradox:

*prakāśaṁ ca pravṛttim ca
mohameva ca pāṇḍava
na doṣeṣi sampravṛttāni
na nivṛttāni kāñkṣati.* XIV/22

"He (is said to transcend the three qualities) who entertains no aversion for light (knowledge), tendency towards action, and also bewilderment (i. e. the respective characteristics of the three qualities *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*) when they appear within him, nor any longing for them when they disappear." It is stated herein that the person transcending the three qualities remains unconcerned even about the appearance and removal of light; and the same again of bewilderment. To take this literally would hardly make any sense. The remark that the ideal person does not mind whether knowledge disappears and bewilderment appears, or that he does not desire the removal of the latter and the dawn of the former, is obviously to be taken as an allegorical expression. It is like saying that the perfectly equanimous person is equanimous not only in respect of all the other dualisms, but even about that of equanimity and non-equanimity itself! The above highly paradoxical verse only indicates that the person transcending the three qualities is fully equanimous at heart and free of all sense of dualism. This absolute equanimity

also includes the attitude of personal unconcern about the performance and non-performance of action.

Respective order of meditation and action.

Let us see also the following verses in the twelfth canto. Their consistent interpretation seems hardly possible without the standpoint adopted in the present work regarding the central theme of the Gītā discourse.

mayyeva mana ādhatsva

mayi buddhim niveśaya

nivasiṣyasi mayyeva

ata ūrdhvaṁ na saṁśayaḥ.

XII/8

atha cittam sanādhātum

na śaknoṣi mayi śhiram

abhyāsayogena tato

māmicchāptum dhananījaya.

9

abhyāse'pyasamartho'si

matkarmapharamo bhava

madarthatmāpi karmāni

kurvaṁsiddhimavāpśyasi.

10

athaitadapyasakto'si

kartum madhyogamāśritāḥ

sarvakarmaphalatyaḡam

tataḥ kuru yatātmavān.

11.

“Fix your mind exclusively in me, concentrate your reason in me, so that you will doubtless abide in my own being—XII/8. And, Arjuna, if you are unable to concentrate your mind steadfastly in me, seek to reach me with the help of (*yogic*) practices—9. And if you are incapable of even such practice, keep on performing actions for my sake (with the idea of attaining me); even by acting thus in my name you will attain perfection—10. And if you are incapable of even such performance of action dedicated to me, then with self-control relinquish whenever performing action all fruit

of it—11.”¹

Now, these verses assign the first place to meditation on God; and thereafter descending assign the last place to abandonment of the ‘fruit’ of action. So far there is not much disagreement. But it has been a serious problem to reconcile this with the next verse which runs as follows:²

śreyo hi jñānamabhyāsāj

jñānādध्यānam viśisyate

dhyānātkarmaphalatyaḡas-

tyāgācchāntīranantaram.

XII/12

Apparently, this verse³ seems to reverse completely the above order, and declare the abandonment of the ‘fruit’ of action as superior even to meditation. To the followers of the *saṁnyāsa* school this presents a serious difficulty; and they therefore try to riggle out of it by treating this eulogy of the abandonment of fruit (i. e. of the performance of non-egoistic action) as only of rhetorical nature. On the other hand the followers of the school of action find therein a very great support for their stand; and therefore insist on a literal interpretation of this alleged eulogy. It is urged on their behalf that the above verse definitely proves that according to the Gītā *karmayoga* (the non-egoistic pursuit of action) is the best of all paths; superior even to meditation and the like⁴.

A look at the twelfth canto as a whole will, however, show that it could not possibly be the intention of the Gītā's author to assign in that verse the highest status to the aband-

1. Some relate *madhyogamāśritāḥ* to the latter part of the verse, and take it to mean ‘resorting to my *yoga* pursue the path of relinquishment of the fruit of all action’. I prefer to relate *madhyoga* to the previous three verses. Therefore, I have followed the prose order as given by Rāmānuja *atha madhyogamāśrityatadāpi kartum na śaknoṣi*.

2. Mahadeo Desai writes: “This *śloka* has been a perfect puzzle to all translators and commentators.” (*op. cit.*)

3. The first part of this verse means ‘Better is knowledge than the mere *yogic* practices; while meditation is superior to (mere) knowledge’. As for the latter half, its meaning is discussed below.

4. See Tilak : Comments on verse XII/12.

onment of the 'fruit', superior even to that of meditation on God. The canto opens with Arjuna's question as to which form of devotion is superior, that of the manifest form of God or of the unmanifest *brahman* (XII/1). In reply, Kṛṣṇa declares the former as superior, while not denying the value of the latter. Saying that ordinarily the latter type is a very difficult one (XII/5), he assures that those who renounce all action unto God, surrendering even the authorship of action to Him, and meditate wholeheartedly on Him are forthwith liberated from this worldly life of mortality (XII/6,7). Thereafter directing Arjuna in the eighth verse to concentrate his mind and reason exclusively in God, Kṛṣṇa states further the various means for that end in a descending order. "Arjuna, if you are unable to concentrate yourself steadfastly in me, try it with the help of *yogic practice*" (XII/9; see also VI/35). And if one is incapable even for that, let him make it a point while performing action to do so in a spirit of dedication unto God; even so his soul would gradually get concentrated in the divine being. And finally if his mind is not prepared even for that, he should at least give up the personal fruit of action, and perform worldly acts with such motive as social good, service of humanity and so on; so that even with it his mind would be gradually freed of selfishness and turn towards God.

Now, the plain purport of all this is that the absolute equanimity of the soul with concentration on God is the final goal; and whoever cannot attain it at once may try to approach it by steps, out of which the pursuit of worldly actions with an abandonment of the 'fruit' is the lowest one. It being so, how could the author of the Gītā suddenly take a sommersault in the immediately following twelfth verse, and declare the abandonment of the fruit of action as superior even to meditation? Besides, even the remaining verses in the canto describe the greatness not of such abandonment of the fruit, but of the devotional meditation on God. Indeed, that seems to be the central idea in the entire twelfth canto. It does not therefore seem consistent to urge that the said verse declares the pursuit of action with the abandonment of the 'fruit' as superior even to knowledge and meditation.

Meaning of 'dhyānāṅkarmaphalatyaḡāḥ'.

One has therefore to read the third quarter of the twelfth verse consistently with all this. The current interpretation of the third quarter takes the following form: 'Better still than meditation is the relinquishment of the fruit of action'; while of the fourth, 'from such relinquishment there immediately follows the state of tranquillity'. Out of this, the meaning of the third quarter does not appeal for the above reasons. It takes as implied the verb *viśiṣyate* ('excels', 'is superior to') occurring in the first line. It is however suggested that the word *dhyānāt* (which is in the *pañcāmī* or ablative form) here means not 'than *dhyānam*' but 'from (out of) *dhyānam*'. It will thus indicate not a comparison but the source or origin. There is little dispute that the ablative form in *tyāgāt* in the fourth quarter conveys such a sense. The same should be adopted in the third quarter also. Thus viewed, the third quarter would yield the following meaning consistent with the context, "when one attains such unwavering meditation accompanied by knowledge, there naturally follows from it the attitude of relinquishment of the 'fruit' of action, and from the latter arises forthwith the state of tranquillity." According to this interpretation, in the list of the *yogic* practice, knowledge, meditation, abandonment of the fruit of action, and tranquillity, the Gītā declares 'the wholehearted meditation on God' as the highest central point.

The important distinction between these two interpretations of the third quarter may be thus clarified. By declaring the abandonment of the 'fruit' of action as superior even to meditation, the performance of action gets undue importance, and its ceaseless pursuit appears as the goal of life. On the contrary, according to the proposed interpretation, the final goal of life does not imply a deliberate renunciation of action, nor does it insist on its ceaseless pursuit. The person with concentration on God and inward equanimity will perform action if and when necessary; but as it will not be accompanied by attachment, it will not disturb the tranquillity of his soul.

This relation between meditation and the performance

of action has also been expressed in the following verses:

tasmātsarveṣu kāleṣu
māmanusmara yudhya ca
māyāṭpitāmanobuddhir-
māmevāiśyaśaśiṣayam. VIII/7
abhyāsayogayuktena
cetasā nāyogāminā
paramaṁ puruṣaṁ divyaṁ
yāti pāṛthānucintay. 8

“Therefore at all moments concentrate upon me, and besides (on this particular occasion) wage (this) war. With your mind and reason surrendered to me you will undoubtedly reach me and me alone—7. Arjuna, he who meditates on the supreme divine spirit (godhead) with a mind trained in the *yogic* practices and turning to nothing else, attains that very state—8”. This nicely indicates the Gītā’s view that right action is but an occasional aspect, while the meditating equanimous attitude the permanent aspect of the ideal state.

Ideal death according to the Gītā.

Let us also look in this connection at the Gītā’s idea of ideal death;

antakāle ca māmeva
smaranmuktvā kalevaram
yaḥ prayāti sa madbhāvam VIII/5
yāti nāstyatra saṁśayaḥ.
prayānakāle manasācalena
bhaktiṃ yukto yogabaleṇa caiva
bhṛuormadhye prāṇamāveśya sanyak
sa taṁ param puruṣamupaiti divyam. 10
sarvadvārāṇi saṁyamya
mano hṛdi nīrudhya ca
mūrdhnyādhāyātmanaḥ prāṇaṁ 12
āsthito yogadhāraṇām.
omītyekākṣaraṁ brahma
vyāharanmāmanusmaran

yaḥ prayāti tyajandehaṁ
sa yāti paramām gatim. 13

“He who at the time of death concentrates upon nothing but me and casting off the body departs (from this world) attains my spirit; of that let there be no doubt—VIII/5. He who when departing from here (concentrates on the supreme spirit and) with his heart full of devotion and his mind unshaking, by the power of *yoga* fixes his life-force (vital breath) neatly between the two eyebrows, reaches that supreme divine spirit—10. Controlling all the (bodily) entrances (the senses), confining the mind within the heart, fixing the life-force in the head, and remaining firm in the state of *yoga*, (12) he who recites the mono-syllable *om* indicative of *brahman*, and contemplating me casts off the body and departs, attains the supreme state—13”.

This obviously contains a greater emphasis on the meditation of God, on the state of the soul’s complete equanimity, than on the performance of action as such. In this account of the last moments of life it is meditation that has been stressed, without any mention of *karmayoga* at all. As remarked above, the soul’s absolute devotional equanimity is the essential permanent characteristic of the *Gītā*’s *yoga*, whereas the performance of action is its occasional feature. The account of the ‘person of stabilised reason’ in the second canto also shows the same. It depicts an excellent picture of the ideal life and death, a tranquil and sublime state, bereft of all personal attachment, devoid of the ego-sense, not involving any notion of oneself either as an enjoyer or as a doer, with willingness to perform the necessary action as called for by the situation, and yet without any insistence on its ceaseless pursuit.

In this light it will be interesting to look at the following verse at the conclusion of the Gītā discourse :

sarvakarmānyapi sadā
kurvāno madhyapāśrayaḥ
matprasādādavāpnōti
śāśvataṁ padamavyayam. XVIII/56

‘Ever willing to perform all sorts of (right) actions, and resorting to me, such a person attains by my grace the eternal everlasting state.’ As will be now seen, this verse can hardly mean that one should devote every moment of his life to the pursuit of action. Just as the expression ‘all actions’ in this verse means ‘all right actions’ and not literally all acts, so the word *śadā* (‘ever’) means not ‘at every moment’ but rather ‘at any moment.’ The verse means that no moment in life is improper for the performance of right action necessary in the prevailing situation; but not therefore that every moment must necessarily be so spent. Particularly as life approaches its close, one should seek to withdraw from the worldly affairs and devote himself to spiritual contemplation.

Reliance is often placed on the Gītā’s reference to ‘the proper guidance of the masses’ in support of the ceaseless pursuit of action. While the enlightened soul, it is said, has nothing to secure for himself as such, (*tasya kāryaṇi na vidyate*—III/17), nevertheless he should continue to perform action for the sake of such guidance, *loka-saṅgraha*. But even granting the importance of such guidance, it does not necessarily imply a ceaseless pursuit of action by the enlightened one till the last. It can as well support the idea of the performance of right action so far as necessary, and for the rest a state of inward equanimity with contemplation on God. Is it that the wise should set an example only in respect of action, and not for the state of meditation or pursuit of knowledge? The idea of guiding the masses need not therefore conflict with the above account of *buddhi-yoga* preached in the Gītā.

‘*Sthitaprajñā*’ only of one type, not two.

In the *buddhi-yoga* of the Gītā the central position is thus assigned to the equanimity of the soul accompanied by spiritual meditation, with an appropriate place therein both for action as also its renunciation. This will further make it clear that the Gītā advocates only one ideal form of life, and not two. And yet, Tilak observes that there are two types of ‘the ideal person of stabilised reason’ described in the Gītā—the *karmayogī* or the follower of the school of action, and the *sanyāsī* or follower of the renunciation of action. As a

matter of fact, however, the Gītā has repeatedly made it clear that there are no such different types of the ideal personality, every *buddhi-yogī* person of stabilised reason partly pursuing action and partly relinquishing it. A look at verses V/3 to 6, VI/1 to 4, IX/28 etc. will leave little doubt on the point. But in spite of that, conceiving two different types of the ideal person, Tilak writes: “The *sthitaprajñā* of the *karmayoga* type and the *sthitaprajñā* of the *sanyāsa* type...both having fully realised *brahman* possess the same state of mind and tranquillity; but the important difference between the two from the point of view of action is that one of them remains absorbed in the state of tranquillity alone caring for nothing else, whereas the other makes constant use of his tranquillity and the attitude of the universal identity of the self in the daily life so far as possible”¹. He further compares the two types of *sthitaprajñā* persons; and indicates the superiority of the *karmayogī* type over the *sanyāsī* from the viewpoint of the world’s good.²

But, what after all is the basis in the Gītā for this classification of the persons of stabilised reason, and for declaring one of them as inferior from the viewpoint of the world? As for the Gītā itself, it plainly says that the true *sanyāsī* does not abandon the performance of right action (vide VI/1, XVIII/7). It emphatically states that *sāṅkhyā*, *sanyāsa*, *yoga* are all in the end one and the same; that the ignorant regard them as different but not the wise (vide V/4.5; VI/2). The Gītā does not regard the two paths as fundamentally separate; and asserting their ultimate identity has advocated the one central theme of *buddhi-yoga*. That is the one and only state of the truly stabilised reason.

Different meanings of ‘karma’.

In passing let us consider here one more point. Objecting to the view that *yoga* necessitates a partial abandonment of action, some one may point to such observations in the Gītā as “None passes even a moment without doing some action”

1. *Op. Cit.* chap. XII para 2.

2. *Ibid.* chap. XII para 8.

(III/5); and urge that if this is so, the ceaseless lifelong pursuit of (non-egoistic) action remains the only possible course. But a confusion is here being made between different meanings of the term 'action'. In one sense it includes not only the voluntary acts, but the bodily natural and reflex activity too; while, in another sense, it may be confined only to the former. In our above discussion it has been taken to mean only voluntary activity. Breathing, blood circulation, digestion and the like are non-voluntary activities. They are in any case bound to continue till the last. But the question is whether the enlightened soul should also remain performing voluntary action.

Though the followers of the school of action conveniently quote the remark that no one can remain without action for a moment, it will be seen that on the whole they too refer to action in the restricted sense of voluntary action. If one really interprets action in that broader sense, and maintains that no embodied being can remain without it even for a moment, the very idea of the renunciation of all action becomes an impossible one. But then, how do the same writers conceive it as a possible alternative and even compare it with *karmayoga*? If the total renunciation of action is itself impossible, how can the *śhītaprajñā* of the *samyāsī* type be at all conceived by Tilak? On the one hand he holds that action cannot be given up; and yet himself says that Śuka, Yājñavalkya and others attained liberation by the (impossible) path of the abandonment of action. This obviously involves an ambiguous use of the word 'action'.

Therefore, in the present context the term 'action' has to be taken as voluntary activity; and in that light it may be said that the Gītā's *yoga* of equanimous reason is partly of the nature of action and partly of its abandonment. Now, as for the Gītā's remark that no being can ever remain without action, it may also be explained as follows. While the bodily processes taking place in accordance with physical laws may not amount to 'action' so long as they go on unhampered in the natural course, any forcible checking of theirs would however not be possible. In case of such restraint, nature would react in the opposite direction and the person will have himself to

deliberately perform that activity, which will then amount to 'action'. If one obstinately insists on checking his breath, he will soon be compelled to breathe himself; and thus the physiological movement which normally goes on by itself will now be performed by his own will. Thus, a deliberate abandonment of all activity not being possible, either nature will compel a person to resume it or he will have to court death. But if he does not entertain any such insistence born of the ego-sense, the physiological movements may continue in the natural course without amounting to his 'action' as such. They would not in that case conflict with the state of actionlessness in the philosophical sense.

The word *karma* however, is used ambiguously not only by the followers of the school of action, but by those of the *samyāsā* school too. To justify their view of the ceaseless pursuit of action, the former try to interpret it in too broad a sense so as to include in it even the non-voluntary activities. The latter, on the other hand, to establish their view of the renunciation of all action, restrict its scope too much and refuse to call the sublime non-egoistic and egoless voluntary activity as action at all. Thus, arguing the absolute incompatibility of knowledge and action, Śaṅkara observes in the introductory portion of his commentary: 'But suppose a person engaged in action due to ignorance or such weaknesses as attachment etc. has his heart purified by sacrifice, charity or penance, and realises the philosophical knowledge that what-ever exists is but the one *brahman* which itself performs no action. Now though the action as also any motive for it on the part of such a person thereafter disappears, still for the sake of the proper guidance of the masses he continues to perform action just as he was intentionally performing it previously. Here, that which appears as the active tendency (the performance of action) on his part is not (in the real sense) action; and therefore even in that state there is no compatibility between knowledge and action.'¹

1. *yasya tu jñānādrāgādidoṣato vā karmāṇi pravṛttasya yajñena dārena tapasā vā viśuddhasattvasya jñānamuṣṇannām paramāññatīlātī avīṣṇamāchakamedam sarvāṇi brahmacartī ceti, tasya karmāṇi karmapravṛtyane ca nūnāpi lokasaṅgrahārtham yajñapūjānam yathā pravṛttistīlātī a karmāṇi pravṛttasya yajñapravṛttirāpāṇi dīśyate na tat karma yena buddheḥ samuccayaḥ syāt.*

If the action performed by the enlightened is not to be called action at all, that would of course end the dispute ! With such a definition of action its total renunciation in the post-enlightenment state can no doubt be easily proved. But it is as unfair to exclude the voluntary activity of the enlightened soul from the scope of action, as to include within it the purely physiological processes. While the voluntary activity of the enlightened differs from that of the ignorant, it will be hardly correct to treat the former as outside the scope of action itself. Kṛṣṇa himself says that he performs action, not something which appears like action.

'Karmayoga' and 'karma-sanyāsa'.

In the end let us discuss in the light of all this the following wellknown verse :

*sanyāsaḥ karmayogaśca
niḥśreyasakarāvubhau
tayostu karmasanyāsāt
karmayogo vīṣṭyate.*

V/2

"Sanyāsa and karmayoga both lead to the final good. But out of the two, karmayoga is better than karmasanyāsa." One school thinks that this verse assigns a secondary place to sanyāsa and the chief place to the pursuit of action. On the contrary, in the view of the other school the performance of action is here either meant for the ignorant Arjuna or is only by way of rhetorical praise. It is however necessary to ascertain carefully the precise meaning of the main terms in this highly enigmatic verse. Can it mean that the two contradictory paths of the complete abandonment and ceaseless pursuit of action are both independently beneficial and secure the same goal? It is an illogical idea that each of two absolutely contradictory means can by itself achieve the same goal. It could be reasonable to say that the same goal is attainable by two means that are outwardly or initially separate but at bottom identical or ultimately merging into each other. It was proper for Arjuna to ask which one of the two opposite paths is the truly desirable one. But any reply that each by itself is

so hardly stands to reason. Kṛṣṇa himself has later indicated the ultimate identity of the two paths mentioned in this verse.

The *sanyāsa* in this verse stands for the seeker's viewpoint, one on the whole indicative of *niṣṭi* or withdrawal and stressing the pursuit of knowledge. This verse does not contain any comparison of two perfect personalities, the *sthita-prajña* of the *sanyāsī* type and that of the *karmayogi* type, with a declaration that the latter is superior to the former. It refers not to the stage of perfection but to its approaches. The ideas of *karmasanyāsa* and *karmayoga* expressed herein are two paths leading to the final state. When it is actually attained, all such distinctions are lost in its all-embracing oneness.

Hence according to this verse the path of *karma-sanyāsa* as also that of *karma-yoga* is *niḥśreyasakara* i. e. one leading to the final state of *niḥśreyasam* (*mokṣa*), but not that state itself.¹ The final end of both is the same. On the contrary, when Kṛṣṇa says in verse VI/2 "That which is called *sanyāsa*, know it, Arjuna, as *yoga*", he is referring to the final end itself. This *yoga* is beyond the *karmayoga* as such; and this *sanyāsa* too is beyond the initial *karma-sanyāsa* path. Verses V/4,5 also stress the complete identity of the final goal. In the later stages the two paths or means merge into each other resulting in only one. Thus he who begins with *karmayoga* has also later on to adopt the *sanyāsa* viewpoint of withdrawal; and likewise one proceeding along the path of *karma-sanyāsa* has also to turn to the performance of necessary action. Neither of these paths is adequate by itself. The only question is which of them is comparatively more important or with which should the common seeker start? And in that connection the latter half of verse V/2 directs that the path of action is better than the other. Men should first learn to duly perform action, and may then withdraw from it in due course. But it would

1. This instrumental character of both of these, their capacity to attain liberation, has been nicely brought out in the following verse from the *Gaṇeśa-Gītā* (canto IV): *kriyāyogo vijogasāpnyubhau mokṣaya sādhanam, tayarmadhye kriyāyogasyāgātānya vīṣṭyate*. The resemblance of this verse with verse V/2 in the Gītā is obvious. That the Gītā looks to *karmayoga* not as the final state but as a means to it has been explained in the previous chapter also. Verses III/19 and XVIII/45 may also be seen in this connection.

not do to insist on not beginning action at all. Therefore the Gītā observes: "By not commencing (performing) actions at all, one cannot attain the highest state of actionlessness (release from action)" (III/4).

In seeking to practise the path of *karma-sannyāsa* from the very outset, there would be a greater probability of hypocrisy than true inward renunciation (vide III/6). Therefore he who 'starts with *karmayoga*' is the wiser one (III/7). Moreover, even apart from this personal consideration, it is also necessary to keep in motion the sacrificial cycle of action on which rests the world's maintenance. Explaining the significance of action for the universal good, the author of the Gītā says:

annādbhavanti bhūtāni

parjanyaādannasambhavaḥ

yajñādbhavati parjanya

yajñāḥ karmasamudbhavaḥ. III/14

"From food creatures come into existence; and from rain results food. Rain comes from sacrifice, and sacrifice is the result of action." In vain does the wretch lead his life who does not lend, so far as it lies within his capacity, a helping hand to continue this cycle further (III/16). Therefore, while both the renunciation and pursuit of action are stages in the path of liberation, yet 'out of the two, the latter is more important than the former'. But this does not mean that one can attain the final good merely by the path of action without any resort to renunciation. Proceeding further he will have also to turn to the stand of withdrawal. Nor will it do if one merely relinquishes egoistic action and seeks to remain still; he will have to perform the necessary right action.

This also clears the precise meaning of *ubhau* in this verse. The paths of performance and renunciation of action are not independently (i. e. alternatively) capable of leading to the final spiritual good. What is in fact meant is that "both of them" (*ubhau*) do so collectively i. e. with mutual collaboration. Each of them is essential in the path of liberation, though in relative comparison the course of action is in some respects more important than the other. But in the end 'both'

are inevitable for attaining the goal. If each of them is regarded as independently capable of reaching the goal, one would find it difficult to explain consistently several observations in the Gītā. Thus, if *karma-sannyāsa* is regarded as independently leading to the goal, it will conflict with such observations as the following.

na ca sannyasanādeva

siddhiṁ samadhiḡacati. III/4

"Nor does one attain perfection merely by the renunciation of action."

anāśritaḥ karmaphalam

kāryaṁ karma karoti yaḥ

sa sannyāsi ca yogī ca

na niragnirna cākriyāḥ. VI/1

"He is the (true) *sannyāsi* and the *yogī* too, who performs the right act without any personal attachment for the action and its 'fruit'; but (he is) not (the true *sannyāsi*) who (merely) abandons (the ritualistic acts like) the lighting of the sacrificial fire, nor (is he the true *yogī*) who (merely) sits still restraining (such processes as) the functioning of his heart".

niyatasya tu sannyāsaḥ

karmaṇo nopapadyate....XVIII/7

"The relinquishment of the duly fixed duty is not proper".

On the other hand, if *karmayoga* is regarded as independently adequate for liberation, the question arises as to why after being directed to perform action, Arjuna was still given the following direction in favour of knowledge appropriate to the *sāṅkhya* school:

sarvakarmākhilam pārtha

jñāne parisamāpyate. IV/33

tadviddhi praṇipātēna

pariprasnena sevayā

*upadekṣyanti te jñānaṁ
jñāninaḥ tattvadarśinaḥ.* IV/34

*yathāidhāmsi samiddho gñir-
bhasmasātkurute* 'rjuna
*jñānāgniḥ sarvakarmāṇi
bhasmasātkurute tathā.* IV/37

*śraddhāvāṁllabhate jñānaṁ
tatparaḥ saṁyatendriyaḥ
jñānaṁ labdhvā parāṁ śāntiṁ
acireṇādhiḡacchati.* IV/39

"Arjuna, all action whatever finds its termination in knowledge—33. The enlightened seers will impart to you (that highest) knowledge; obtain it from them with an attitude of reverence, an inquiring mind, and service (of theirs)—34. Arjuna, just as the highly kindled fire reduces fuel to ashes, so does the fire of knowledge reduce all actions to ashes—37. He obtains this knowledge who has mastered the senses, is engaged in its earnest pursuit, and is with faith. Having obtained the knowledge he forthwith attains supreme tranquillity—49." Indeed the very commencement of Kṛṣṇa's reply to Arjuna is with the exposition of the *sāṅkhya* view, with a clear mention of it in verse II/39. It appears that according to the Gītā the *sanyāsa* path characterised chiefly by the contemplation of knowledge, and the path of action, are not totally opposed but rather supplement each other.

There is for Liberation thus but one way with the pursuit of knowledge and the performance of action as two of its aspects. He who attains the final state belongs exclusively neither to the one nor to the other. In the apt words of the Gītā, he is *sanyāsayogyuktātmā* i. e. one attaining *sanyāsa* as well as *yoga* (IX/28). He is superior to both the man of knowledge as also one of action as such (VI/46). It is the state of *buddhiyoga*, one of absolute equanimity of the heart, mind and soul. He who attains it becomes *brahmayogyuktātmā*, one who has achieved union with the *brahman* (V/21).

*īhaiva tairjitaḥ sargo
yeṣāṁ sāṁye sthitaṁ manaḥ
nirdoṣaṁ hi samam brahma
tasmādbrahmaṇi te sthitaḥ.* V/19

"Those whose mind is firmly established in supreme equanimity overcome the life (cycle) of births and deaths even while here in this world; *brahman* being flawless and perfectly equanimous, such persons are verily established in *brahman* itself."

ERRATA

PAGE	LINE	INCORRECT	CORRECT
6	28	(26)	(29)
34	7	<i>kariyasi</i>	<i>kariyasi</i>
46	1	(The line is superfluous)	
66	7	XIII/7	XVIII/7
70	3rd from bottom	hearing,	hearing')
71	12	shouldr egard	should regard
83	12	IV/9	IV/8
91	18	XIII/16	VIII/16
104	2	slackness	slackness
110	last	Arjuna's	Arjuna's
113	21	<i>vedā</i>	<i>vedā</i>
126	1	<i>When</i>	<i>when</i>
134	last	auses	causes
164	7	pletasur	pleasure
169	footnote line 3	init al	initial
170	8	defenca	defence
170	10	enjoyment	enjoyment
171	22	II/63	II/65
201	16	<i>matparāḥ</i>	<i>matparāḥ</i>
211	3rd from bottom	<i>Con ideration</i>	<i>Consideration</i>
270	17	whilegiving	while giving
270	20	sorrow or	sorrow nor

GLOSSARY OF IMPORTANT SANSKRIT TERMS

(Only broad meanings relevant in this thesis are given below)

<i>abhyāsa</i> ,	Practice (of <i>yoga</i> exercises).
<i>adharma</i> ,	Evil; unrighteousness.
<i>agatāsūn</i> ,	Non-departed lives.
<i>ahankāra</i> ,	Ego-sense; sense of doership.
<i>akarma</i> ,	Absence of action.
<i>akārya</i> ,	Wrong; improper.
<i>anāsakta</i> ,	Without attachment.
<i>anāsakti</i> ,	Absence of attachment.
<i>api</i> ,	Even (see pp 27-29).
<i>aprakāśa</i> ,	Lack of light; ignorance.
<i>apavṛtti</i> ,	Inertia.
<i>arthavāda</i> ,	A rhetorical expression.
<i>arthe</i> ,	(See pp 127-130).
<i>aśocyan</i> ,	Not deserving to be grieved for.
<i>ārambha</i> ,	Commencement (of action).
<i>āśrama</i> .	A mode of life prescribed by Hindu scriptures.
<i>bhāikṣam</i> ,	Alms.
<i>bhāvanā</i> ,	Conviction of the heart.
<i>brahman</i> ,	Highest form of truth and reality.
<i>brahmacarya-āśrama</i> ,	(See p. 15)
<i>brāhmaṇa</i> ,	One belonging to the priestly class.
<i>brāhmi sthiti</i> ,	Final state of <i>yoga</i> .
<i>buddhi</i> ,	Faculty of reason.
<i>buddhi-yoga</i> ,	Highest state of equanimous reason.
<i>cāturvarṇya</i> ,	The fourfold social order prevalent in Hindu society.
<i>dharma</i> ,	1. Righteousness. 2. Duty.
<i>dharmayuddha</i> ,	Righteous war.
<i>dhyānam</i> ,	Meditation.
<i>doṣa</i> ,	Evil; sin.
<i>dvandvam</i> ,	Dualism.
<i>doṣa</i> ,	Aversion.

<i>gatāsūn,</i> <i>gṛhasīha-āśrama,</i> <i>hatvā,</i> <i>hiyam,</i> <i>jñāna,</i> <i>jñāna-yoga,</i> <i>kāma,</i> <i>kānya,</i> <i>karma,</i> <i>karma-phala-tyāga,</i> <i>karma-sannyāsa,</i> <i>karma-yoga,</i> <i>kārpānya,</i> <i>kārya,</i> <i>krodha,</i> <i>krpā,</i> <i>krpāṇa,</i> <i>kṣatriya,</i> <i>kulakṣaya</i> <i>lokasaṅgraha,</i> <i>mahatpāpam,</i> <i>moha,</i> <i>mohakalilam,</i> <i>mokṣa,</i> <i>muni,</i> <i>naimittika,</i> <i>nirahaṅkāra,</i> <i>nirmama,</i> <i>niṣiddha,</i> <i>niṣkāma,</i> <i>niṣṛti,</i> <i>niyata,</i> <i>nyāsa,</i> <i>om tat,</i> <i>pāpam,</i> <i>pātakam,</i>	<p>The departed lives. The householder's walk of life. Having killed. The good. Knowledge. The path of knowledge. Egoistic attachment. Thoroughly egoistic (act). See p 266 Action. Abandonment of the 'fruit' of action. Renunciation of action. The path of action. Poorness of spirit. Right; proper. Anger. Pity. Of a low nature. One belonging to the warrior class. Destruction of the family. Proper guidance of the masses. Heinous sin. Bewilderment; intellectual confusion. muddy slough of <i>moha</i>. Final liberation. Monk. Occasionally necessary (acts). Devoid of ego-sense. Without the sense of mine-ness. Forbidden (acts). Non-egoistic; devoid of <i>kāma</i>. The attitude of withdrawal (from worldly pursuits). Duly fixed (duty). Relinquishment. Sacred expressions indicating the indescribable <i>brahman</i>. Sin. Sin.</p>
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<i>phalam,</i> <i>prajñāwāda,</i> <i>prakṛti,</i> <i>pramāda,</i> <i>pravṛtti,</i> <i>rāga,</i> <i>rajas,</i> <i>rājasa,</i> <i>sakāma,</i> <i>samādhī,</i> <i>sam-moha,</i> <i>saṅkara,</i> <i>sāṅkhyā,</i> <i>sannyāsa,</i> <i>sannyāsa-āśrama,</i> <i>sannyāsīn, sannyāsī,</i> <i>santiāpa,</i> <i>sattva,</i> <i>sānya-buddhi</i> <i>sātvika,</i> <i>smṛti,</i> <i>sthitaprajña,</i> <i>sukham,</i> <i>svajanam,</i> <i>svarga,</i> <i>śāstra,</i> <i>śreyas,</i> <i>śruti,</i> <i>śruti-vipratipannā,</i>	<p>1. Result. 2. Egoistic consequences of action. Sophistry. Primordial physical nature. Aberration. The active tendency; opposite of <i>niṣṛti</i>. Attraction. The second of the three qualities of <i>prakṛti</i>. Of the <i>rajas</i> nature. Egoistic; with <i>kāma</i>. (See pp. 68-70). (See <i>moha</i>). Licentious intermixture. The metaphysical school advocating the path of knowledge and renunciation. (See pp. 15-17). The fourth and last walk of life prescribed by Hindu scriptures. One who has adopted <i>sannyāsa</i>. Mental excitement. Highest of the three qualities of <i>prakṛti</i>. Equanimous reason. Of the <i>sattva</i> nature. Scriptural works (other than <i>śruti</i>). A person of stabilised reason. Pleasure. Kinsmen. Heaven. 1. Scripture. 2. Science. True good. 1. The Vedas and Upanishads. 2. The Vedas. 3. Heard knowledge. (See pp. 70-72). (See pp. 66-73).</p>
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- śūdra,
tamas,
tāmasa, tāmasi,
triṅṇātita,
Tyāga,
upakrama,
vairāgya,
vaiśya,
varṇa,
vānaprasāha-āśrama,
vikarma,
viśāda,
viśvarūpa,
yoga,
yogin, yogi,
one who has adopted *yoga*.
- One belonging to the fourth (last) *varṇa*.
The lowest of the three qualities of *prakṛti*.
Of *tamas* nature.
One transcending the three qualities of *prakṛti*.
Abandonment.
Introduction.
Sense of renunciation of worldly affairs.
One belonging to the trader class.
Social class.
(See p. 15).
Wrong action.
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